
STRATEGIC
POWER
AND
SOVIET
FOREIGN
POLICY

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CAT. FOR
LOAN STACK
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LOAN STACK

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PREFACE

THIS BOOK is about the interrelation of Soviet strategic military power and foreign policy. It deals with the years since the advent of nuclear weapons made strategic power seem too destructive to employ militarily and yet too dangerous to ignore in political calculations. The novel question of international relations in our time is the political effect in peacetime of mankind's concern over the consequences of thermonuclear war. The foreign policies of the major powers have manifestly been affected by this unprecedented peril but in diverse ways that are the subject of controversy among statesmen, military thinkers, and scholars. We shall be concerned with its effects on Soviet foreign policy.

The present Soviet leaders rose to power under Khrushchev at a time when the Soviet Union first began to acquire the new weapons. They, no less than their former leader, have been attracted by the political potentialities of the new situation created by nuclear weapons as well as sobered by its dangers. In Part 1, this new situation is presented as it emerged after Stalin's death, when the U.S.S.R. first acquired the means to wage intercontinental nuclear warfare and when the Soviet leaders' military and political understanding of these weapons began to take form.

Part 2 examines in detail the boldest attempt yet made to exploit strategic weapons politically, an attempt made possible by Soviet development and test-firing of an intercontinental ballistic missile in advance of the United States. This led to a remarkable effort, sustained over four years, to deceive the West regarding the pace and scope of the Soviet Union's program for building and deploying ICBM's. The myth of the "missile gap," which this Soviet effort helped to create, dominated the strategic dialogue between the United States and the Soviet Union from the launching of the first Sputnik in the fall of 1957 to the building of the Berlin wall in the second half of 1961. The Soviet attempt to deceive the Western powers regarding the U.S.S.R.'s ICBM capabilities will therefore be discussed here in considerable detail.

Part 3 consists in a reappraisal of Soviet foreign policy during this period in the light of what became known only several years later about Soviet military capabilities. In retrospect, it attempts to distinguish the military-political actions that Soviet leaders were prepared to take

from those they merely threatened. The clearest exposition and the decisive test of Soviet political strategy in those years was the campaign against Berlin from 1958 to 1962. When the myth of Soviet missile superiority was exposed late in 1961, thus frustrating the Soviet political offensive in Berlin and elsewhere, the Soviet leaders attempted to give it new impetus by clandestinely deploying missiles in Cuba. Their failure revealed even more starkly the limitations imposed on Soviet foreign policy by United States strategic preponderance. It compelled the Soviet leaders to reconsider the potentialities of the political use of strategic power in the light of military policies that would be feasible in the foreseeable future.

Part 4 examines three alternative Soviet military policies that will most likely be considered by the post-Khrushchev leadership and that could conceivably give rise to one of the following strategic states: continued Soviet inferiority, some form of parity, or Soviet superiority of a marginal kind. These strategic states could provide the basis for divergent political strategies, which are considered here in terms of their feasibility and possible consequences. The book concludes by considering the role that strategic power may play in the future in relation to other instruments of Soviet foreign policy.

This study presents the conclusions of its authors on the subject of the political use of Soviet nuclear strategic power down to mid-1965, when the research was terminated. However, additional evidence that became available in the interval before publication has been examined and found to be consistent with the analyses and conclusions contained in the book. This study is a contribution to The RAND Corporation's continuing program of research undertaken for United States Air Force Project RAND.

A. L. H.
M. R.

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THIS BOOK is the product of research on the Soviet Union's political use of strategic power conducted by the authors, jointly and individually, over a period of several years. During this time, numerous colleagues contributed to the shaping of our views and particularly to our understanding of the difficult military problems that are examined. Among these colleagues, we are especially indebted to Bernard Brodie, Herbert S. Dinerstein, Daniel Ellsberg, Alexander L. George, and Hans Speier. Of course, the authors alone are responsible for the views and conclusions expressed in the book. Our responsibility for this study, the whole as well as the separate parts, is indivisible. Each chapter was first discussed jointly, then drafted by one author and revised by the other; when substantive differences arose, they were resolved by intellectual exchanges, either oral or written. Many of the ideas expressed in these pages originated as by-products of these exchanges and constitute the reward of our collaborative intellectual labor. We or our research assistants made our own translations of the Russian materials cited in this book. Interested readers may find translations of most of them in *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*.

The authors wish to express their gratitude to Janet Zagoria and Lilita Dzirkals, who, at different times, provided extensive and conscientious research assistance.

Finally, Myron Rush wishes to take this opportunity of thanking his coauthor, Arnold Horelick, for generously contributing a disproportionate amount of effort to the completion of the work after he (Rush) went on leave of absence from The RAND Corporation in 1963.

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PART 1

NUCLEAR UNCERTAINTY:
ARENA OF THE COLD WAR

PRODUCTION CLAIMS

NOVEMBER, 1958–OCTOBER, 1959

IN THE FIFTEEN MONTHS prior to November, 1958, Soviet leaders claimed to have successfully tested the ICBM and to possess a stock of vehicles but said nothing directly of their production. In that month, however, in a speech on the seven-year plan, Khrushchev announced: "The production of the intercontinental ballistic rocket has been successfully set up."¹ Early in January, 1959, he distinguished between "creation" and "production" of the ICBM and affirmed Soviet pre-eminence in both.² When presenting the draft plan to the Twenty-first Party Congress several weeks later, Khrushchev implied that further progress had been made by announcing: "Serial production of the intercontinental ballistic rocket has been successfully organized."³ Later, toward the end of 1959, Khrushchev characterized Soviet ICBM production so as to imply that the highest stage of production had been achieved; he said the Soviet ICBM was "on the assembly line."⁴ And shortly afterward he announced to the Supreme Soviet that the U.S.S.R. led "in the creation and mass production of intercontinental ballistic rockets of various types."⁵

Khrushchev first spoke of the production of Soviet ICBM's just a few days after precipitating the Berlin crisis by his demand, on November 10, 1958, that allied occupation of West Berlin be terminated within a short time.⁶ His follow-up statements on ICBM production to the Supreme Soviet were made in January and February, 1959, during the period of rising Soviet pressure on the allied governments as they attempted to co-ordinate their responses to the new Soviet challenge. Meanwhile, in the United States the "missile gap" controversy had been born. Two weeks before Khrushchev made his claim regarding serial production of the ICBM, reports of a secret briefing by Defense Secretary McElroy to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had touched off a sharp controversy in the United

¹ Control figures for the development of the national economy of the U.S.S.R. for 1959 to 1965, *Pravda*, November 14, 1958.

² Speech at a meeting of the Belorussian Supreme Soviet, *Pravda*, January 4, 1959.

³ *Pravda*, January 28, 1959 [italics added].

⁴ *Pravda*, November 18, 1959.

⁵ *Pravda*, January 15, 1960 [italics added].

⁶ The relationship between Soviet missile deception and the U.S.S.R.'s Berlin strategy is analyzed in chapters ix and x, pp. 105–25.

States regarding the magnitude of the Soviet ICBM threat faced by the United States and the measures required to cope with it.⁷ The day after Khrushchev made his serial production claim, Secretary McElroy told the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee that the United States had no intention of matching the Soviet Union "missile for missile" in the ICBM field but would rely on its diversified arsenal of heavy bombers and intercontinental and shorter-range missiles to gain superiority.⁸

The ICBM claims that Khrushchev chiefly sought to make credible in this period were those having to do with production. He relied chiefly on logical progression and on repetition and verbal reinforcement of the claim. For example, he announced the organization of serial production in his initial speech to the Twenty-first Party Congress and simply reaffirmed it with emphasis in his concluding speech: "When we say that we have organized the serial production of intercontinental ballistic rockets, it is not just to hear ourselves talk."⁹ A week later he said that at first "some leaders of the West automatically expressed doubts, but on second thought promptly stated that if the Russians said so, it means that serial production of missiles has certainly been organized. This is really so."¹⁰ The following year Khrushchev spoke of "mass production" of the ICBM.

Although Khrushchev's claim that the Soviet ICBM was in serial production did not lend itself to direct demonstration, some measure of support appeared to be provided for it indirectly by the expenditure of ICBM vehicles in flight tests and space activities. It was reported in the United States press that by 1960 some thirty Soviet ICBM test-firings had taken place.¹¹ In addition, at least six vehicles were expended in space shots by the end of 1959 (three Sputniks and three Luniks). Since only a handful of Soviet ICBM's were deployed as late as 1961, however, most of the vehicles produced were evidently for purposes of research and development and space boosters.

⁷ *New York Times*, January 17, 1959. Five days earlier, a *New York Times* article, reportedly based on interviews with "numerous persons having intimate knowledge of the defense effort," gave the following forecast of Soviet versus American ICBM inventories in the early sixties: 1960, 100 to 30; 1961, 500 to 70; 1962, 1,000 to 130; 1963, 1,500 to 130; 1964, 2,000 to 130. The gap was not expected to be closed until after 1964 when sizable numbers of Polaris and Minuteman missiles were scheduled to enter the United States force.

⁸ *New York Times*, January 30, 1959.

⁹ *Pravda*, February 5, 1959.

¹⁰ *Pravda*, February 13, 1959.

¹¹ Robert A. Kilmarx, *A History of Soviet Air Power* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1962), p. 260.

It appears, then, that in speaking of serial production of ICBM's Khrushchev deliberately sought to mislead the West. Certainly, his reference to mass production of the ICBM in January, 1960, was meant to persuade the West that Soviet ICBM's were being produced in substantial numbers for early deployment, which was not true.

In this progression of Khrushchev's production claims, nothing was said of an operational capability. Defense Minister Marshal R. Ya. Malinovsky, however, addressing the same congress that heard Khrushchev tell of the organization of serial production of ICBM's, expressed gratitude to the men who had "equipped the armed forces with a whole series of military ballistic missiles, [including] intercontinental."¹² This claim was repeated several weeks later, on Army Day, by Marshals K. S. Moskalenko (later appointed commander of rocket troops) and V. I. Chuikov.¹³ And in the Soviet military newspaper *Krasnaia zvezda* ("Red Star"), Marshal A. A. Grechko asserted that the Soviet armed forces had "received" the ICBM.¹⁴

If there is any uncertainty that Khrushchev's production claims were intended to deceive, the claims of Soviet military leaders in February, 1959, were clearly false insofar as they implied an operational capability. Certainly, the marshals' claims seem designed to create a misleading impression regarding a non-existent operational capability.

United States official spokesmen did not publicly credit the Soviet Union with an operational ICBM capability at that time. In June, Secretary McElroy reportedly told newsmen that the U.S.S.R. was expected to have ten ICBM's by the end of 1959.¹⁵ A month later, however, according to a United Press International dispatch on a filmed television interview of McElroy by Senator Kenneth Keating, the Defense Secretary said the Soviet Union might have beaten the United States in the race to get the first intercontinental ballistic missiles into the hands of combat units.¹⁶ UPI quoted McElroy as saying that the number of operational Soviet long-range missiles was "at the most only a very few—less than ten" and that this was not too important because of countervailing American retaliatory power.

At the Twenty-first Party Congress in January, 1959, Defense Minister Malinovsky described some of the characteristics of the

¹² *Krasnaia zvezda*, February 4, 1959.

¹³ *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, February 23, 1959; *Izvestiia*, February 22, 1959.

¹⁴ *Krasnaia zvezda*, February 22, 1959.

¹⁵ *New York Times*, June 28, 1959.

¹⁶ *New York Times*, July 27, 1959.

Soviet ICBM: it was very powerful, invulnerable, and had "pinpoint accuracy." The accuracy of the Soviet ICBM had earlier been questioned by United States leaders. President Eisenhower said in October, 1957, that although the Soviets had demonstrated they could fire objects "a very considerable distance" the military value of their missile could not be judged without knowledge of its accuracy.¹⁷ In support of his new claim regarding the Soviet ICBM's accuracy, Malinovsky now cited the success of the Lunik space shot earlier in the month.¹⁸

In this country, Malinovsky's claim was anticipated on January 29 by Wernher von Braun and Homer Stewart of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, who testified before a Senate subcommittee that American space experts believed the U.S.S.R. could now pinpoint a city in the United States with a ballistic missile fired more than five thousand miles away. They said this appraisal was based largely on the accuracy of the January 2 Lunik firing.¹⁹ Subsequently, however, President Eisenhower and Secretary McElroy disputed Malinovsky's claim.

In this period, Soviet leaders were apparently setting the stage for later claims of military superiority based on strategic missile forces. For the time being, however, they claimed only a rough equality with the United States. They were quick to dispute Western claims of superiority, especially when such claims were taken to imply a retaliation-proof strategic capability against the Soviet Union. According to Malinovsky, "playing down the effective capacity of the U.S.S.R. to deal a counterblow to the aggressor and exaggeration of their transoceanic capabilities, especially in the field of strategic ballistic rockets, do not testify to the presence of common sense among the U.S. military."²⁰ That the U.S.S.R. had "no less force and capabilities" than the United States was stressed by Khrushchev as well as Malinovsky.²¹

The claimed achievement of strategic parity with the United States provided the foundation for radical revisions in the Soviet leaders'

¹⁷ *New York Times*, October 10, 1957.

¹⁸ The lunar rocket launched by the Soviet Union on January 2, 1959, bypassed the moon at a distance claimed to have been around 3,500 miles and then went into heliocentric orbit between the earth and Mars. A second lunar rocket impacted the moon in September. See Arnold L. Horelick, "The Soviet Union and the Political Uses of Space," in Joseph M. Goldsen (ed.), *Outer Space and World Politics* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1963), p. 56.

¹⁹ *New York Times*, January 30, 1959.

²⁰ *Pravda*, April 11, 1959.

²¹ *Pravda*, March 19, 1959; April 11, 1959.

public estimates of the effectiveness of Soviet deterrence and the likelihood of war. At the Twenty-first Party Congress in January, 1959, Khrushchev declared that because of favorable shifts in the balance of power the danger of capitalist restoration (imposed by external force) was now finally excluded: in the U.S.S.R. "socialism has triumphed not only fully, but irreversibly."²² Earlier, the end of "capitalist encirclement" had been officially proclaimed: "At present," Khrushchev stated in 1958, "it is not known who encircles whom, the capitalist countries the socialist states, or vice versa."²³

Accompanying these claims were increasingly confident assertions about the deterrent effect of Soviet military strength, that is, assertions that the shift in the balance of forces was now understood in the West. Thus, Khrushchev declared in May, 1959:

The imperialists know our strength. To attack us is tantamount to suicide; one would have to be insane for this. I do not believe they are as stupid as all that; they understand the consequences which the unleashing of war against the socialist countries may have for them.²⁴

And a few months later, Khrushchev reiterated this estimate, leaving no doubt about its authoritativeness by attributing it to the Party Central Committee and the Soviet government:

Comrades, the Central Committee of our Party and the Soviet Government believe that a situation has at present been created in which the imperialists will hardly dare to launch a war against our motherland or against the countries of socialism. Our forces and those of our socialist allies are colossal and in the West, apparently, this is now understood.²⁵

The possibility that a madman, like Hitler, might embark upon a suicidal adventure, was conceded, but Khrushchev expressed confidence that such adventures could be "cut short" or that "a strait jacket can be found" for such a madman.²⁶ The Soviet leaders no longer emphasized, as they had four years earlier when they deposed Malenkov, the danger of a rational, premeditated attack by the West against the U.S.S.R. They now stressed "the grave danger that even a slight miscalculation by statesmen in one country or another may lead to yet another war."²⁷ The danger that war might result from a technical accident or from an irrational act by a subordinate officer

²² *Pravda*, January 28, 1959.

²³ *Pravda*, March 27, 1958.

²⁴ *Pravda*, June 1, 1959.

²⁵ *Pravda*, July 30, 1959.

²⁶ *Pravda*, October 15, 1958; January 28, 1959.

²⁷ *Pravda*, August 31, 1959.

became a standard Soviet theme during this period, spearheading protests against armed SAC training flights and airborne alerts. Even so, war, which until 1956 was still deemed inevitable so long as capitalism existed, was now officially no longer "fatalistically inevitable" and might soon (1965) "be excluded from the life of society."²⁸

Khrushchev insisted that the probability of premeditated Western attack on the U.S.S.R. had been reduced "not because the imperialists have become wiser or kinder, but because they have become weaker." He likened the aspiration of the West to destroy the socialist countries to the desire of a hungry wolf with blunt fangs to kill a powerful lion.²⁹

Despite these confident assertions about the improved strategic position of the Soviet Union, Khrushchev's disinclination for the time being to claim a large operational ICBM capability was evident. He concentrated instead on gaining credence for his ICBM production claims. The most expansive Soviet missile claims during this period were reserved for the NATO countries of Europe. Khrushchev in particular frequently seized opportunities to boast of the U.S.S.R.'s capability to wipe these countries from the face of the earth with missiles (presumably of medium or intermediate range). In fact, this was sometimes done even in response to United States claims of a capacity to destroy the Soviet Union.³⁰

By contrast, Khrushchev employed vague generalizations and other circumlocutions to avoid explicit claims to a large operational ICBM capability. Evidently he did not wish—by making blatantly premature claims that would in any case be disbelieved—to destroy his credibility abroad as an authoritative source of information on the Soviet ICBM. Thus, in responding to Western assertions that NATO's long-range bomber capability conferred strategic superiority

²⁸ *Pravda*, January 28, 1959.

²⁹ *Pravda*, March 27, 1959.

³⁰ "These bellicose militarists should ponder about their country and its follies. If such a country as ours, which occupies one-sixth of the globe, can, as they assert, be destroyed in a brief period, how much time is needed to destroy other smaller countries, the allies of the United States, by resorting to the same means with which we are threatened? If the American generals and admirals ignore their allies and write them off, it is their own affair" (Khrushchev press conference, March 19, 1959, *Krasnaia zvezda*, March 20, 1959). And on another occasion, "If we are attacked we shall try first of all to destroy the rocket bases directed against us. And what does destroying these bases mean? They are located not in bare rocky country, but where people live. But the governments of countries which provide territory for rocket bases of a transoceanic power for some reason do not take the vital interest of their peoples into account" (Khrushchev speech in Albania, *Izvestiia*, May 29, 1959).

over the U.S.S.R., Khrushchev sought to nullify this admittedly huge bomber force, not by claiming a large Soviet ICBM capability, as he might have done, but rather by asserting that the West's bombers were vulnerable to modern air defenses.³¹ Similarly, when Western leaders said, according to Khrushchev, that the United States would not be menaced in the event of war since the Soviet Union "still has few intercontinental rockets," the Soviet Premier countered their statements, not by explicitly claiming a large ICBM capability, but by asserting that the United States had "long ago" lost its invulnerability to attack. On one occasion, he added, imprecisely, that the Soviet Union now had "the means to deliver a crushing blow against an aggressor at any point on the earth's surface."³²

The low key in which Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders pitched their ICBM claims during the summer and early fall of 1959 may also have been related to the chain of diplomatic events that led to the short-lived "spirit of Camp David" in the fall. There was a perceptible lull in Soviet boasts regarding the U.S.S.R.'s ICBM program after the announcement in the summer that Khrushchev would visit the United States. Khrushchev himself intimated the reason for this: "I want to go to the U.S. as a man of peace. . . . If during my talks with the President I had a rocket sticking out of one pocket and a second out of another . . . what kind of talk would that be?"³³ Nevertheless, the very eve of Khrushchev's departure for the United States was the moment chosen by the Soviet Union to launch the U.S.S.R.'s second lunar rocket, Lunik II, which impacted the moon on September 12. When he arrived in Washington, the Soviet Premier presented the American President with a replica of the metal Soviet pennant that had been placed in the Lunik payload. Although Khrushchev made much of Soviet space triumphs during his visit to the United States, he apparently resolved not to speak of missiles, for he observed midway: "I have already made many speeches in the United States but have not once resorted to the word 'arms,' let alone 'rockets.'" ³⁴ But he said this just after anger had led him to break his resolve, adding, "If I have spoken about it today, you must understand I had no choice." When he spoke of rockets on this occasion, however, it was less to boast of the size and scope of the Soviet ICBM

³¹ Interview with West German Social Democratic party editors, *Pravda*, May 9, 1959.

³² Speech to the Twenty-first Party Congress, February 5, 1959, *Vneocherednoi XXI s'ezd Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuza* ["Extraordinary XXI Congress of the CPSU"] (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1959), Vol. II, p. 405.

³³ *Pravda*, August 6, 1959.

³⁴ *Pravda*, September 20, 1959.

program than to warn of what it might become if the United States rejected peaceful coexistence and maintained the cold war:

If you are not ready for disarmament and want to go on with the arms race, we accept that challenge, for we now have the necessary strength and all the possibilities to create modern weapons, and as for the output of our rockets, these are on the assembly line.³⁵

In his efforts to intimidate the United States, then, Khrushchev found it useful to suggest two somewhat contradictory theses: that the U.S.S.R. was *rapidly acquiring* a powerful force that could destroy the United States, and that the U.S.S.R. would *take steps to acquire* such a force if the United States was not more conciliatory. The first of these themes, intended to deceive, was dominant; the second, more in accord with the actual Soviet ICBM program and its potentialities for expansion, was only briefly prominent and was discarded almost as soon as Khrushchev returned to the U.S.S.R.

³⁵ This translation was distributed by the Associated Press (see the *New York Times*, September 21, 1959). These words, spoken by Khrushchev extemporaneously at a reception in Los Angeles on September 19, after he had finished reading his prepared text, were softened in the official Soviet version: "If you are not prepared for disarmament and want to continue the arms race, we will have no choice but to go on making rockets, which in our country are being turned out by the assembly-line method" (*World without Arms: World without Wars* [Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960], Vol. II, p. 221).

CAPABILITY CLAIMS

NOVEMBER, 1959–APRIL, 1960

EVEN AFTER RETURNING from the United States in October, 1959, Khrushchev continued to claim only that the U.S.S.R. was ahead of all other countries in the production of rockets;¹ he still said nothing of an ICBM operational capability. In an interview earlier in the year, Khrushchev had vaguely asserted, under prodding, that the Soviet Union had "enough rockets for America, too, should war be unleashed against us";² but not until November, 1959, did he try to indicate that the U.S.S.R. possessed a substantial operational ICBM capability:

We now have stockpiled so many rockets, so many atomic and hydrogen warheads, that, if we were attacked, we could wipe from the face of the earth all of our probable opponents.

He repeated this statement almost verbatim on December 1, 1959.³ By leaving bombers out of account and making rockets the vehicles for this terrible blow and by talking of "all of our probable opponents," he gave the impression that the vehicles were in fact ICBM's capable of reaching the United States. It is true that Khrushchev did not then or later single out the United States among the countries that could be "wiped from the face of the earth" by the Soviet Union. But on the basis of no reasonable interpretation could the United States be excluded from the category of the U.S.S.R.'s "probable opponents." The formula employed, however, was imprecise. By straining the meaning of Khrushchev's words, for example, one might suppose that the rockets "now" stockpiled were to supplement bombers previously available. But even this bare possibility, like other similar ones, was subsequently eliminated in a new variation of the formula. In January, 1960, in his authoritative speech on defense policy to the Supreme Soviet, Khrushchev advanced a new form of warning:

I stress once again that we already have enough nuclear weapons—atomic and hydrogen—and the corresponding rockets to deliver this weapon to the

territory of a possible aggressor, [so] that if some madman stirred up an attack on our state or on other socialist states we could literally wipe from the face of the earth the country or countries that attacked us.⁴

This statement reduced the ambiguity of the earlier one in the following ways: (a) The destruction was now to be visited upon any country that attacked the U.S.S.R. instead of on any probable opponent, thus eliminating the bare possibility that the rulers in their capitals, not the peoples of countries, were the targets. (b) The word "literally" was added to the phrase "wipe from the face of the earth," as though to make the threat of annihilation unequivocal. (c) It was now made clear that the nuclear weapons were to be delivered on target by rockets, not bombers.

An important ambiguity that remained arose from the retention of the term "rockets." Khrushchev presumably meant land-based rockets, since he made no mention of either bombers or submarines from which rockets might be launched. He had not previously claimed an air-to-surface missile capability, and after 1958 he had dropped his earlier references to a submarine-launched missile capability. The only land-based Soviet rockets at that time, however, were in the U.S.S.R.: to reach the continental United States would require ICBM's. Thus, in asserting that the U.S.S.R. had sufficient rockets to wipe from the face of the earth the countries that might attack it, Khrushchev implicitly claimed a not inconsiderable operational ICBM force. This claim was repeated to the Supreme Soviet by the Minister of Defense, Marshal Malinovsky. Subsequently, it was quoted by several other Soviet military leaders, including the head of the Warsaw Pact forces, Marshal Grechko.⁵

Shortly after Khrushchev's speech, Moscow announced the successful testing over a distance of sixty-five hundred nautical miles of a rocket ostensibly designed to further the Soviet space program, although its military significance was made clear.⁶ These tests seemed to confirm Khrushchev's remarks to Senator Hubert H. Humphrey in December, 1958, regarding the Soviet Union's capacity to extend greatly the range of its ICBM.⁷ The first rocket was said to have hit

⁴ *Pravda*, January 15, 1960.

⁵ *Pravda*, May 9, 1961. Grechko added, in his own words: "Soviet rocket troops now [are] able to destroy the aggressor at any point on earth."

⁶ In an address to the Indian Parliament, Khrushchev stated that "quite recently [January, 1960] we successfully tested powerful intercontinental ballistic rockets which demonstrated new great achievements of Soviet scientists" (*Pravda*, February 12, 1960).

⁷ Humphrey, "My Marathon Talk with Russia's Boss," *Life*, January 12, 1959, p. 80.

¹ *Pravda*, October 8, 1959.

² Interview with West German Social Democratic party editors, *Pravda*, May 9, 1959.

³ *Pravda*, November 15, December 1, 1959.

within two kilometers of its aiming point, and this report provided the first numerical claim as to the accuracy of the Soviet ICBM.⁸

The assertion in early 1960 that the U.S.S.R. had sufficient rockets to destroy the United States was, in its implications, the most far-reaching Soviet ICBM claim. Although the claim, of course, could not reasonably be taken to mean that the Soviet Union was capable of killing the entire population of "any attacking country" (obviously a reference to the United States), it clearly implied the possession of a large number of operational ICBM's. Some notion of what Khrushchev meant to convey by the expression "literally wipe from the face of the earth" is suggested by an earlier "country-busting" threat he had leveled against West Germany. In May, 1959, Khrushchev, agreeing with an earlier estimate, said that not more than eight warheads with yields of from three to five megatons would have to be exploded over West Germany—a country less than one-thirtieth as large as the United States—in order to "put it out of commission."⁹

Marshal Malinovsky, who spoke to the Supreme Soviet immediately after Khrushchev had spoken on defense policy, explicitly referred to calculations of this type made by "both our own and foreign specialists." In an illustrative calculation, he used as a unit of measure a bomb with a yield of two megatons; but the state he used had an area of only three hundred fifty to five hundred thousand square kilometers, far smaller than that of the United States. Malinovsky concluded that if one hundred two-megaton bombs were exploded over such a state the resulting blast damage and lethal radioactivity would transform it into "a lifeless desert."¹⁰

Even if Khrushchev's claim was not based on such precise numerical calculations, it clearly was made on the basis of informed reflection. It extended previous claims to include the United States and was the culmination of a long sequence of ICBM claims. Khrushchev asserted it three times: twice in an equivocal formulation and finally in a major address on defense policy to the Supreme Soviet, when a number of ambiguities in the earlier formulation were resolved. Moreover, it was repeated by top military leaders, including Defense Minister Malinovsky, who were certainly informed and presumably had reflected on what they were saying. The claim was

⁸ *Pravda*, January 22, 1960. Subsequently, TASS said of the first test in a new series in the fall of 1961 that the rocket hit within one kilometer of the target (*Krasnaia zvezda*, September 15, 1961).

⁹ *Pravda*, May 9, 1959.

¹⁰ *Pravda*, January 15, 1960.

deliberate and meaningful, but it was clearly false. Nor was it false merely in being slightly premature: the Soviet leaders had no intention of deploying large numbers of their first-generation ICBM, and this must certainly have been known to Khrushchev at the time. More than a year later, as is now known, the U.S.S.R. had still deployed only "a handful" of ICBM's.¹¹

The question arises: Could Khrushchev really have believed that his claim of January 14, 1960, might influence Western beliefs about the strategic balance? Khrushchev must have known from public statements by responsible United States government officials that United States estimates did not credit the U.S.S.R. with having more than ten operational ICBM's at the time he made his claim.¹² But Khrushchev's efforts to deceive Western opinion required only that there be *uncertainty* regarding estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities, and of this there was ample evidence. Soviet leaders on several occasions publicly questioned the ability of the United States to assess Soviet operational ICBM capabilities.

In mid-1959, several months after military leaders announced that the Soviet armed forces had been supplied with ICBM's, Khrushchev said:

Certain American generals and admirals . . . allege that the Soviet Union has few intercontinental rockets. . . . [Almost certainly it had no operational ICBMs at that time.] But this, after all, is what the American military men assert. It should be said, however, that it is always better to count the money in your own pocket than that in the other fellow's. I might say, incidentally, that we have enough rockets for America, too, should war be unleashed against us. . . .¹³

Khrushchev's confidence that the United States was uncertain about its estimates of Soviet ICBM capability may have been enhanced during his visit to this country, when, in his presence, certain of his American hosts acknowledged their respect for Soviet rocket capabilities on the basis of demonstrated Soviet achievements in space.¹⁴ Moreover, the expressed official United States estimate of the Soviet ICBM program was strongly criticized in some military and political circles, and by journalists, as being too conservative.

¹¹ See p. 37.

¹² Secretary McElroy's December 1, 1959 press conference, *New York Times*, December 2, 1959.

¹³ *Izvestiia*, May 5, 1959.

¹⁴ Khrushchev remarked, for example, "When I was in the United States, American leaders told me: 'Yes, we have now become convinced that you can deliver freight to any point on earth'" (*Pravda*, October 10, 1959).

Although the estimates of the future Soviet operational ICBM force were especially criticized, the official estimate of the existing force was also thought to be too low. (It was publicly acknowledged in February, 1960, that parts of the intelligence community had registered dissents from the national intelligence estimates.)¹⁵ This controversy, which was partly conducted in public, accentuated the note of uncertainty in the West's estimates. Publicly announced United States policies sometimes had a similar effect. On December 1, 1959, Defense Secretary McElroy disclosed plans for a possible airborne alert, with nuclear-armed bombers continuously in the air, to make up for any missile gap that might arise.¹⁶ This manifest concern that the U.S.S.R. might rapidly deploy a large ICBM force and thus achieve a first-strike capability may have encouraged Khrushchev to imply that the U.S.S.R. already possessed a missile capability to wipe the United States from the face of the earth.

Whatever its uncertainty about the future, however, in late 1959 the administration credited the U.S.S.R. with only a small operational ICBM capability. According to McElroy, both the United States and the U.S.S.R. had about ten combat-ready ICBM's. A discrepancy having appeared between what the U.S.S.R. claimed and what the United States publicly conceded, the Soviet military newspaper, *Krasnaia zvezda*, hastened to defend the Soviet position:

We declare openly that the "data" at the disposal of A. Dulles are of little interest to us. To calculate in Washington the number of rockets and other types of Soviet arms is of as little use as counting crows on the fence. Why does the master director bother at all? We are prepared to answer his question. How many rockets do we have? Enough! Enough to wipe from the face of the earth any country which dares attack the Soviet Union. N. S. Khrushchev frankly and openly declared this at the January session of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet.¹⁷

Were these assertions of confidence that the United States could not learn the size of the Soviet ICBM force real or feigned? Could this confidence have survived the Soviet leaders' awareness of the U-2

¹⁵ United States, Senate, *Hearings before the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, in Conjunction with the Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences, on Missiles, Space and Other Major Defense Matters*, 86th Cong., 2d sess., *passim*, esp. 114-21 (hereinafter cited as *Hearings before the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee*).

¹⁶ Some weeks later, in his budget message (January 18, 1960), President Eisenhower rejected this proposal but authorized the acquisition of a standby alert capability for heavy bombers.

¹⁷ January 31, 1960.

flights? Subsequently, as we shall see, Khrushchev intimated that the U-2's had not flown over areas where the ICBM was deployed, thereby implying that, although they may not have found ICBM sites, this provided no basis for United States confidence that there were none to be found.

Another means employed to heighten American uncertainty in estimating Soviet ICBM capabilities was the assertion by both Khrushchev and Malinovsky that Soviet ballistic missile sites could readily be concealed. Speaking of ballistic rockets, including those of great range, Marshal Malinovsky observed:

The building of large, expensive airfields with complicated equipment is not required for launching rockets. It is far easier to camouflage and even completely conceal rocket-launch positions; this guarantees a higher degree of security and invulnerability for rocket weapons.¹⁸

Khrushchev also spoke of Soviet ability to conceal the launching sites of *strategic* rockets (that is, rockets having a range of more than one thousand kilometers), though he was probably intentionally vague as to whether ICBM's were to be included in that category. Soviet territory is so immense, he observed, that "we have the possibility of dispersing rocket facilities, of camouflaging them well."¹⁹

It appears, then, that in early 1960 the Soviet leaders believed that within the United States government and politically important groups in America there was substantial uncertainty regarding the Soviet ICBM force and that this uncertainty could be heightened by misleading statements about the location and concealment of Soviet missile sites and deceptive claims of numbers of missiles. If, in the eyes of the Soviet leaders, American beliefs and opinions regarding Soviet strategic power seemed uncertain and, to some extent, manipulable, this kind of uncertainty may have been even more apparent to them in Western Europe, where the Soviet interest lay in undermining the confidence of America's allies in its capability and will to deter or turn back Soviet encroachments in Europe. Heightening the impression in Western Europe that Soviet strategic power exceeded that of the United States was now particularly important in the light of the negotiations on Berlin and Germany that were scheduled to recommence at the summit in May. And in the early months of 1960 that impression evidently did predominate in Western Europe and to a lesser degree throughout the non-Communist world. A survey by the

¹⁸ *Pravda*, January 15, 1960.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

United States Information Agency in 1960 found that radical changes had taken place in popular assessments of relative United States-Soviet military strength as compared with views held in the years prior to Sputnik and ICBM.²⁰ In Western Europe, the foreign area of most critical importance to the United States, the survey found that most people "were convinced that the balance of military power no longer favors the United States as it formerly did":

While sophisticated political and press opinion tends to regard the current military situation as one of nuclear stalemate in which neither of the two super-powers has any material advantage over the other, the more impressionistic popular opinion has seemingly concluded from Soviet boasts of superiority and American admissions of a temporary "missile gap" that the United States is not only currently militarily inferior to the USSR but will continue to be so for the next decade or two as well.²¹

Elsewhere, in the world, according to the USIA report, most opinion was divided on military strength, the predominant belief being that a nuclear stalemate existed. "However, in almost all areas," the report stated, "expectations appear to be that the USSR will achieve military superiority, although there is probably no clear concept of what this superiority will consist of, or what its significance will be."²²

If, as seems abundantly clear, Khrushchev was engaged in a grand deception of the West, what were the consequences inside the Soviet bloc? The rocket claim served as the chief justification for the one-third reduction in the Soviet armed forces proposed by Khrushchev in January, 1960. Its falsity must have raised a serious problem with widespread ramifications in the Soviet military establishment. The

²⁰ United States Information Agency, Office of Research and Intelligence, *Free World Views of the US-USSR Power Balance* (R-54-60, August 29, 1960).

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5. The results of opinion surveys concerning relative military strength, conducted in five Western European countries shortly after Soviet ICBM claims reached their culmination in January, 1960, are given below (*ibid.*, p. 22).

	Great Britain February, 1960	West Germany February, 1960	Norway June, 1960	France February, 1960	Italy February, 1960
Number of cases	613	599	1,020	608	591
United States ahead (%)	15	22	15	16	38
U.S.S.R. ahead (%)	59	47	45	37	32
Both equal (%)	4	8	17	16	5
No opinion (%)	22	25	23	31	25

²² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

topmost Soviet commanders, at least, could not readily be deceived in matters affecting the strength of Soviet strategic forces and must therefore have been privy to the deception. Several of them evidently connived at Khrushchev's policy, including Defense Minister Malinovsky and Marshal Moskalenko, later commander of strategic rocket troops for a time.²³ Others among the top commanders, perhaps also aware of the deception, may have resisted the troop cut, for several were removed from their posts in the following months.²⁴

In its final form, as noted above, Khrushchev's rocket claim referred to "an attack on our state or on other socialist states," thereby extending the Soviet nuclear umbrella over the other countries of the Communist camp. Although Soviet leaders were doubtless confident that the U.S.S.R. would not soon be called upon to employ its newly asserted rocket capability on behalf of its allies, the assertion was not devoid of risks.²⁵ Chinese Communist leaders, already at odds with their Soviet comrades on questions of foreign and military policy, might have been emboldened to exploit Khrushchev's claims politically against the West in ways that could prove dangerous if they were not told the truth about Soviet strategic forces. On the other hand, if they were taken into the conspiracy, they could use the information to embarrass Khrushchev in the political hostilities that were already dividing the Communist bloc. One of the most crucial and obscure aspects of the Sino-Soviet dispute involves the Chinese Communist leaders' beliefs during these years regarding Soviet ICBM capabilities. If they believed that Khrushchev was telling the truth in January, 1960, about Soviet rocket capabilities, their resentment must have been increased by his relatively cautious foreign policy, particularly by his refusal to assume risks on behalf of the U.S.S.R.'s Chinese allies. The consequences must have been equally disruptive of the

²³ In subscribing to Khrushchev's claim, however, Moskalenko significantly altered it so that "the Soviet armed forces," rather than simply its nuclear missile forces, were credited with the capability of wiping any country from the face of the earth (*Izvestiia*, January 16, 1960). Malinovsky did not subscribe to Khrushchev's claim in his speech to the Supreme Soviet, although he affirmed it in a speech delivered a few days later (*Krasnaia zvezda*, January 20, 1960).

²⁴ I. S. Konev gave up his post as head of the Warsaw Pact military forces and V. D. Sokolovsky resigned as chief of the general staff. Neither man was reassigned, although Konev later received an important post as commander of Soviet forces in East Germany after the troop cut was rescinded. In an article published a month after Khrushchev's defense policy speech to the Supreme Soviet, Konev seemed to stress Soviet superiority in technology and over-all military strength rather than in operational strategic rockets (*Sovetskaia Rossiia*, February 23, 1960).

²⁵ Malinovsky cautiously amended Khrushchev's formula to read "an attack on our state and on other socialist countries" [*italics added*]. He seemed to imply that only an attack on the U.S.S.R. would bring about a Soviet attack on the United States.

alliance, perhaps more so, if the Chinese leaders were aware that while greatly exaggerating the progress of the Soviet ICBM program Khrushchev was in fact retarding it by diverting funds to satisfy consumer demands and to assist "bourgeois nationalist" regimes in Africa and Asia.

Khrushchev's magnification of the Soviet ICBM capability contrasts with his belittlement of the Soviet bomber capability. He revealed that the Soviet Union had reduced its production of bombers and forecast that bomber production would continue to decline and might even cease.²⁶ In part, as noted above, this is readily explicable in terms of his political objectives: to make it appear that in strategic weapons the U.S.S.R. was a full generation ahead of the United States, which was still relying on bombers that were vulnerable and hence obsolete. Yet the effect of these statements was to reinforce the West's confidence that the growth of the Soviet bomber capability against the United States had been slow and to downgrade future Soviet claims of intercontinental bomber capabilities.

These tactics are not so paradoxical as they may appear. The Soviet bomber capability against the United States in 1960, although not insignificant, was greatly inferior to the SAC bomber force and to the growing United States missile capability. Since there was by this time little expressed uncertainty in the United States about the size of the Soviet bomber force, it did not lend itself to exaggerated claims. This was not true, however, of the Soviet ICBM force: it was evident that a considerable margin of uncertainty existed in American estimates and that there was wide disagreement regarding the appropriate assumptions that had to be made in lieu of certainty. The Soviet leaders apparently saw an opportunity to exploit this uncertainty at a time when United States preponderance in strategic forces was actually about to reach a new peak.

Khrushchev's January, 1960, claim of a missile capability to wipe any hostile country from the face of the earth was the extreme instance of a series of deceptive claims that were designed to serve several distinct aims of Soviet policy. The relationship between Soviet missile deception and Soviet foreign policy will be discussed in some detail in Part 3. Here we shall briefly list some of the objectives that Soviet claims were probably meant to support:

1. They were designed to conceal from the West the decision of Soviet leaders not to engage in a large-scale deployment of the first-generation ICBM despite their apparent capability to do so. By concealing this decision, the Soviet leaders hoped to reap whatever political benefits might have accrued to them had they actually decided to engage in such a buildup.

2. The deceptive claims, insofar as they could cause United States leaders to doubt the superiority of American strategic forces, were probably also meant to help deter a United States attack on the U.S.S.R. under circumstances in which the Soviet leaders believed the United States might otherwise conceivably contemplate it. In the report on military affairs to the Supreme Soviet in which Khrushchev claimed a missile capability to wipe any country from the face of the earth, Khrushchev for the first time explicitly asserted that the Soviet strategic force could survive a United States attack even if the United States "really succeeded in striking its blow by surprise." Such a surprise attack Khrushchev treated as the most severe test to which the Soviet strategic force could be subjected.²⁷ Previously, the claimed capacity of the Soviet force to survive surprise attack was based on the expressed assumption that the United States could be denied the advantage of surprise, that a surprise blow could be "averted," "forestalled," or "pre-empted." Khrushchev now went farther to claim that the invulnerability of the Soviet strategic missile force, which was protected by various measures—dispersal, camouflage, and duplicate targeting (Khrushchev subsequently alluded to hardening²⁸)—assured that a United States surprise attack could not incapacitate the Soviet strategic force and that the attacking countries would have to take into account the certainty of "a due rebuff."

Most importantly, the nature of this rebuff was radically altered. As we have seen, in the first two years after Sputnik, the retaliatory damage that the U.S.S.R. claimed it could inflict on the United States had been left indefinite: the United States could no longer count on its relative invulnerability but would suffer equally with, if not more than, the U.S.S.R. In contrast, the level of damage that could be inflicted by retaliatory blows against American allies in Western

²⁶ *Pravda*, January 15, 1960. "Almost the entire military air force is being replaced by rocket equipment. We have by now sharply cut, and it seems will continue sharply to cut and even discontinue the manufacture of bombers and other obsolete equipment. . . ."

²⁷ *Pravda*, January 15, 1960. For a detailed analysis of Khrushchev's remarks on the question of surprise attack, see Arnold L. Horelick, "'Deterrence' and Surprise Attack in Soviet Strategic Thought," *Royal Canadian Air Force Staff College Journal*, 1960.

²⁸ Speech by Khrushchev at the Third Congress of the Rumanian Workers Party, Bucharest, *Pravda*, June 22, 1960.

Europe was made more definite: complete destruction was threatened. Khrushchev repeatedly stated that in the event of war these smaller, less distant countries would be "wiped from the face of the earth." Now Khrushchev collapsed this distinction and threatened *maximum retaliatory damage* against the United States. The distinction that he had formerly made between the vulnerability in nuclear war of small European countries, on the one hand, and the U.S.S.R., on the other, he now made between all hostile countries and the U.S.S.R.

Although this extreme Soviet claim no doubt was meant to contribute to deterrence of an unprovoked United States attack, the capability it implied was excessive for this purpose. In fact, confidence that the United States would not launch such an attack was already sufficient to convince the Soviet leaders that it was safe to prolong the great Soviet inferiority in intercontinental forces by foregoing a "crash" program for production and deployment of the early ICBM.

3. Another important object of the series of missile claims was probably to put the United States on the defensive in the duel of strategic threats. In this attempt the Soviet leaders were perhaps not without success. Secretary Robert S. McNamara was later to say that the ending of the myth of the missile gap "made it possible to take a firm line with our adversaries and at the same time to reassure our friends that we are strong and determined to use our strength if we have to."²⁹ Even after it was publicly revealed early in 1960 that United States intelligence estimates of the projected size and pace of Soviet ICBM deployment had been scaled down—that the U.S.S.R. was not engaging in a "crash" program³⁰—administration leaders conceded that the Soviet Union "might enjoy at times a moderate numerical superiority during the next three years," with the peak probably occurring in 1962 (Secretary Thomas S. Gates, Jr.).³¹ The fierce public debate over the extent of projected Soviet ICBM superiority and its implications tended to obscure the fact of current United States strategic superiority and to lessen its political value.

The Soviet missile and space programs succeeded in curbing United States use of strategic threats against the U.S.S.R., a point on which Soviet leaders have shown marked sensitivity.³² On a number of

occasions, as in his interview with Averell Harriman in July, 1959, Khrushchev countered United States strategic threats, explicit or so interpreted by him, by invoking the specter of Soviet ICBM's.³³ If, as it now appears, Soviet leaders made exaggerated rocket claims in early 1960, their object was probably not so much to force concessions from the West in a direct confrontation on some crucial issue as to deter the West from the political or military exploitation of its superior strategic power and to provide a promising environment for their own offensive political moves when there appeared to be small risk in making them. Certainly, Soviet military leaders would be more willing to exaggerate Soviet ICBM capabilities in order to conceal weakness than to bluff a superior opponent in an open confrontation.

The circumstances in which the extreme claim was publicized may have seemed to mitigate its inherent dangers. Khrushchev had just returned from his visit to America, where he had arranged for a future summit meeting. International tension had declined considerably from the high point of early 1959, and there appeared to be no reason for a new precipitate rise, unless the Soviet leaders embarked on some dangerous course of action. In view of subsequent developments, it appears that this was not their intention.

The question remains, Why did the U.S.S.R. not try to compensate for its great inferiority in intercontinental bomber forces by capitalizing on its capacity to acquire a large ICBM force before the United States could do so? The answer, apparently, is that the Soviet leaders were confident that they could control the danger of general war even without a large intercontinental strike force. The grounds of this confidence were chiefly political. As had been demonstrated during the previous years, United States preponderance in strategic forces was not an active threat to the security of the U.S.S.R. as long as the latter did not take actions that directly menaced vital American interests. Even if a situation seemed likely to arise in which the American incentive to initiate general war might appreciably increase, the Soviet leaders were probably confident that they could readily extricate themselves by political maneuvers. At the same time, the Soviet leaders probably recognized that United States leaders were unlikely to make large concessions under pressure from the U.S.S.R. if they did not credit the Soviet Union with a strong ICBM force. Thus,

capability to cause great retaliatory damage to the U.S.S.R. in the event the United States was attacked rather than the capability to destroy the U.S.S.R. if it attacked a United States ally.

³³ See Harriman, "My Alarming Interview with Khrushchev," *Life*, July 13, 1959, pp. 33-34.

²⁹ *Saturday Evening Post*, December 1, 1962, p. 18.

³⁰ *Hearings before the Preparedness Investigations Subcommittee*, p. 442.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 457.

³² A comprehensive and detailed study of United States military claims in recent years has yet to be made. One has the impression, however, that after Sputnik responsible United States officials tempered their claims of strategic superiority, stressing the

✓ the Soviet leaders had strong incentives for seeking to persuade the West that the Soviet Union would rapidly acquire a large ICBM force and little fear that failure of the deception would endanger the immediate security of the U.S.S.R. Not only was deception regarding the Soviet ICBM a useful instrument of an offensive foreign policy, but bold Soviet initiatives tended to make the deceptive claims more credible.

THE U-2 AFFAIR AND ITS AFTERMATH, MAY–AUGUST, 1960

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS in the late spring and early summer of 1960 were dominated by the U-2 incident, the collapse of the Paris summit meeting, and the heightened tension in East-West relations associated with these events. The political context was one in which the Soviet leaders might have been expected to repeat the extreme claims regarding Soviet strategic-offensive capabilities that they had asserted only a few months earlier in the more relaxed atmosphere of the period following the Camp David meeting. But despite the grave provocation that Khrushchev said had been offered by the United States and despite his acknowledgment that revelations of past U-2 overflights had been interpreted in some quarters as a sign of Soviet weakness, he and the other Soviet leaders employed new caution in the military claims they now put forward.

Their new claims were strongly conditioned by the U-2 incident and the questions it raised regarding (1) the U.S.S.R.'s past as well as future air defense capabilities; (2) its ability to keep secret the location of its strategic missile bases; and (3) the vulnerability of these bases if their locations were to become known. ✓ Although new and categorical claims were made concerning these aspects of the Soviet defensive posture, the Soviet leadership displayed a marked restraint in making new claims for their strategic-offensive capabilities and even in reiterating the most extreme of their old ones.

Soviet caution was most pronounced in the days following Khrushchev's May 5 announcement in the Supreme Soviet that a United States reconnaissance aircraft had been brought down on Soviet territory. The Soviet Premier took pains to deny that the Soviet government regarded the U-2 incursion as a precursor of war. Although he sought to derive maximum political and propaganda advantage from the incident, he reiterated his intention to proceed to the Paris summit meeting as planned. And he told the Supreme Soviet on May 7 that the incident "must not compel us to revise our plans by increasing appropriations for weapons and for the army, must not compel us to halt the process of reducing the army."¹

¹ *Pravda*, May 8, 1960.

In the wake of the U-2 incident, Khrushchev's references to Soviet strategic rocket capabilities fell far short of his extreme claims of late 1959 and early 1960. He seemed more concerned to emphasize the readiness of the Soviet strategic rocket force rather than its size or capabilities. Thus, on May 5, he stated that although the Soviet Union, unlike the United States, had no bombers on alert, "we have rockets on alert which will hit accurately and inevitably their assigned target and will work better and more reliably than aircraft on alert."² That this alert rocket force included some ICBM's was implied by Khrushchev in his press conference at the U-2 exhibit several days later, when he said that Soviet rockets would explode on United States territory "in the very first minutes of a war," if the United States were to unleash one.³

On May 7 Khrushchev announced that a main command of rocket troops had been established under Marshal M. I. Nedelin, an organizational move said to flow from the conversion of the Soviet armed forces to rocket weapons.⁴ Although the announcement was presumably intended to convey the impression that recent progress warranted the creation of a separate command for rocket troops, what Khrushchev said explicitly—that "the Soviet Army and Navy are being converted to rocket weapons"—was merely a repetition of what he had announced four months earlier from the same rostrum.⁵

Following the abortive summit meeting, Khrushchev indicated satisfaction with the state of Soviet missile production by announcing that the U.S.S.R. had already ceased the production of "certain types of rockets and put the brakes on the manufacture of certain other types." Rockets, he observed, "are not cucumbers, you know—you don't eat them—and more than a certain number are not required to repel aggression."⁶ Khrushchev had anticipated this announcement a year earlier, when he stated that "perhaps it will not be long before we will begin to curtail the production of rockets." He had then added that rockets could not be stored "like cucumbers"; they were "delicate things" and needed "constant maintenance."⁷ On neither occasion did Khrushchev specify the types of rockets involved, and it is possible that by the spring of 1960 the production of certain older types of tactical or surface-to-air missiles had in fact been terminated or curtailed. But the 1960 announcement, coming immediately after a

² *Pravda*, May 6, 1960.

³ *Pravda*, May 12, 1960.

⁴ *Pravda*, May 8, 1960.

⁵ *Pravda*, January, 15, 1960.

⁶ *Pravda*, May 29, 1960.

⁷ *Pravda*, May 12, 1959.

reference to Soviet ICBM and MRBM (medium-range ballistic missile) capabilities, evidently was meant to convey the impression that production of strategic rockets was being curtailed.

It was only after the extraordinary tension raised by the U-2 affair and the summit collapse had dissipated that Soviet leaders again began to make flat assertions of Soviet missile superiority, though still avoiding the most extreme claims of the period prior to the U-2 flight. In July, Khrushchev spoke once more of the "undoubted" superiority of the U.S.S.R. in modern means of nuclear weapon delivery.⁸ Mikoyan had earlier termed this superiority "vast."⁹ During his visit to Austria in July, Khrushchev reaffirmed that, militarily, the Soviet Union was the world's most powerful country.¹⁰ This categorical claim, first voiced by Khrushchev at the beginning of his Indian trip in February, 1960, and reiterated frequently by him and by other Soviet leaders, had last been made on March 4 by Khrushchev in Kabul.

Three new claims of the period May–August, 1960, related directly to the U-2 incident and were designed to offset its negative strategic implications. One of these pertained to the intelligence on Soviet missile bases that the United States might have acquired through the U-2 operation and, by implication, to the credibility of past Soviet missile claims.

In his numerous speeches and press conferences in the first seven weeks after the downing of Francis Gary Powers' U-2 near Sverdlovsk, Khrushchev avoided these crucial questions, though he stated that missile bases were among the U-2 intelligence targets. During his Supreme Soviet speech on May 7, he displayed some of the prints allegedly made from film recovered from Powers' aircraft and said they included photographs of airfields, petrol stores, and industrial enterprises; he said nothing of rocket bases. It was not until June 21, when he spoke at the Third Congress of the Rumanian Workers' Party in Bucharest, that Khrushchev attempted to deal with the implications of the U-2 flights for the security of Soviet rocket bases and, indirectly, for the credibility of past Soviet claims regarding Soviet missile strength.

I assert that the data obtained by the spy flights are of no importance to the defense of the United States. We know that the spy flights were carried out precisely over regions which have no rocket bases. We know

⁸ Television and radio speech, Vienna, July 7, 1960, *Pravda*, July 8, 1960.

⁹ Press conference in Oslo, June 29, 1960, TASS radioteletype in English to Europe, Moscow, June 29, 1960.

¹⁰ Television and radio speech, Vienna, July 7, 1960, *Pravda*, July 8, 1960.

that two-three years ago the regions of our proving grounds, where we conduct experimental launchings of our rockets, were photographed. Precisely the proving grounds for testing rocket weapons were photographed, and not military-strategic rocket bases.¹¹

As far as operational ICBM bases were concerned, Khrushchev's expressed confidence that none had been photographed may have been well founded: there may not yet have been any to photograph. However, Khrushchev did not rest his case with a denial that the U-2's had acquired the missile-base data they had sought. "Suppose even," he went on, "that rocket bases should be photographed." Such target intelligence, he asserted, could be of value only to a country that is preparing to strike first. But even for such purposes knowledge of the location of an opponent's missile bases would be inadequate since, "given modern means, it is impossible to put a rocket base out of commission by one, two, or even several blows. Rocket technology now ensures the means for dealing a retaliatory blow in any case." If the phrase "rocket technology" referred only to the measures that Soviet leaders had previously claimed were being taken to protect the Soviet missile force—dispersal, camouflage, concealment—the new claim of relative invulnerability would not have been credible; that claim could only be justified if Soviet missiles had been hardened, and no such assertion had previously been made by any Soviet spokesman.

Thus, the most far-reaching Soviet claims of the period stressed the effectiveness of Soviet air defenses. In his initial treatment of the U-2 affair, Khrushchev restricted himself to boasts that Soviet air defenses could now prevent high-altitude low-speed reconnaissance aircraft of the U-2 type from overflying the Soviet Union with impunity. His purpose was evidently both to deter new flights and to counter the negative effects of his revelation that such flights had been conducted in the past without effective opposition.

Soon, however, possibly in reaction to the State Department's unexpected acknowledgment of Presidential responsibility for the overflights, Khrushchev extended his air-defense claim to cover not only U-2's but SAC bombers as well. "If there are still politicians," he said in a speech at the Czechoslovak Embassy on May 9, "who would like to rely on bombers, they are doomed to failure. With contemporary military equipment, bombers will be shot down before they approach the target."¹² Thereafter, he exploited the downing of the

¹¹ *Pravda*, June 22, 1960.

¹² *Pravda*, May 10, 1960.

U-2 as a demonstration of how well Soviet air defenses could perform against SAC bombers. Thus, in a speech on May 28, he stated:

When we shot down the plane flying at 20,000 meters, the American militarists became alarmed. . . . They were alarmed primarily because their whole military concept of attack on the Soviet Union, based on the use of bomber planes, had now fallen to the ground. Modern bombers, after all, fly at an altitude of 12,000 to 15,000 meters, no higher. Consequently, since we downed a plane flying at 20,000 meters, then, of course, not a single bomber could get through to its target. They would be brought down either by rockets, by fighter planes, or by anti-aircraft artillery which can shoot at their altitude.¹³

Though the Soviet leaders' strategic claims in the aftermath of the U-2 period were concerned chiefly with the U.S.S.R.'s defensive capabilities, the strategic threats they issued against United States allies were remarkably bold. Khrushchev and Malinovsky stated explicitly that the Soviet Union would strike at any overseas base of the United States from which future overflights might be launched.¹⁴ And when questioned at a press conference on the type of weapon they would employ in such a strike, Khrushchev did not deny that it might be nuclear.¹⁵ Thus, for the first time, Soviet leaders threatened to strike allies of the United States, possibly with nuclear weapons, in response to other than a physical attack on the U.S.S.R., one of its allies, or a friendly third power.

The Soviet threat to strike at bases that might be used in future U-2 missions was not issued in the opening days of the U-2 crisis. During the Supreme Soviet session at which the downing of Powers' plane was revealed, Khrushchev stated only that the U.S.S.R. would give "a most serious warning" to those countries harboring United States reconnaissance aircraft. Apparently, the Soviet leaders interpreted the State Department announcement of May 7, Secretary of State Christian A. Herter's elaborations of it on May 9, and President Eisenhower's supporting press conference statement two days later as signifying the intention of the United States to continue the flights. (Khrushchev was not officially informed until May 16 that the President had decided to suspend the flights.) Evidently, the threats were issued in order to bring pressure to bear indirectly on the United States through its allies. President Eisenhower's statement in Paris on May 16 that the U-2 flights had been suspended and would not be

¹³ *Pravda*, May 29, 1960.

¹⁴ See, for example, *Pravda*, May 10, 12, 29, and 30, June 4, 1960.

¹⁵ *Pravda*, June 4, 1960.

resumed probably reassured the Soviet leaders, despite Khrushchev's complaint that the President's pledge could only bind the United States until the expiration of his term in office. The threat to strike American overseas bases was repeated several times in May and June but gradually dropped out of Soviet statements thereafter. In July, when the Soviets shot down an RB-47 in the Barents Sea, Khrushchev explained the Soviet failure to strike at the Norwegian base from which it was said to have taken off by asserting that since the intrusion was stopped at the very beginning "the Soviet government limited itself to destroying the aircraft."¹⁶

A concurrent crisis unrelated to the U-2 affair occasioned an unprecedented, though highly ambiguous, Soviet strategic threat against the United States itself. Upon returning to the Soviet Union from his Austrian visit in July, Khrushchev turned his attention to the crisis in United States-Cuban relations. Addressing a Teachers' Congress in Moscow on July 9, the Soviet Premier declared:

It should not be forgotten that the U.S. is not so inaccessibly distant from the Soviet Union as it used to be. Figuratively speaking, in case of need Soviet artillerymen can support the Cuban people with their rocket fire if the aggressive forces in the Pentagon dare to launch an intervention against Cuba. And let them not forget in the Pentagon that, as the latest tests have shown, we have rockets capable of landing directly in a given square at a distance of 13,000 kilometers. This, if you will, is a warning to those who would like to settle international issues by force and not by reason.¹⁷

Although this threat was couched as a "figurative" illustration of Soviet missile capabilities, and not directly as a guarantee of assistance to Fidel Castro, the contingency that it covered was unique. Never before had a Soviet leader threatened even vaguely to strike the continental United States in any eventuality other than an American attack on a member of the bloc. (Cuba at that time was not yet a "socialist country," and Castro had not yet declared himself a Marxist-Leninist.) It was also the first Soviet threat to retaliate against a United States move in the Western hemisphere. In October, 1960, under prodding by Cuban journalists who asked him to comment on the "imperialist" contention that his statement was merely "symbolic," Khrushchev replied evasively that he would "like such statements to be really symbolic." But when pressed to say

¹⁶ *Pravda*, July 13, 1960.

¹⁷ *Pravda*, July 10, 1960.

whether Soviet rockets were "adequately prepared" to meet the possibility of intervention by the United States, Khrushchev replied affirmatively.¹⁸ Thus he kept the ambiguous Soviet threat in force, while strongly indicating his reluctance to carry it out. Two years later "Soviet artillerymen" were in position, if only briefly, "to support the Cuban people with rocket fire" from Cuba itself.

¹⁸ *Pravda*, October 29, 1960.

RETREAT TO PARITY

SEPTEMBER, 1960–AUGUST, 1961

BY THE FALL of 1960 an important new stage was reached in the regression from Khrushchev's extreme claims of a missile capability that could wipe any opponent from the face of the earth. The two chief elements of this new position had appeared earlier, but it was not until they became more distinct and reinforced each other that they revealed a modification in the declaratory policy of the U.S.S.R.

1. After January, 1960, Khrushchev no longer asserted that Soviet casualties in nuclear war would be far less than the West's. In a speech to a foreign audience (in Austria on July 2, 1960), he went so far as to say: "If we start war to settle disputes between States . . . we shall destroy our Noah's Ark, the Earth."¹

2. After October, 1960, Khrushchev said several times that, in the event of a world war, fatalities would be great on both sides and would amount to "hundreds of millions."

To an extent, this bald statement had been anticipated by Khrushchev's early claims of a capability to destroy the NATO countries in Europe and by his subsequent statement that the U.S.S.R. could wipe from the face of the earth any country that might attack it. Moreover, in his speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations in September, 1959, Khrushchev had explicitly said that if war broke out, "its toll would run not into millions, but into tens and even hundreds of millions of human lives."² But three months after that speech he minimized the U.S.S.R.'s share of these casualties when he told the Supreme Soviet that losses to the Western countries would far exceed Soviet losses.³ However, when Khrushchev began, in the fall of 1960, to stress the general consequences of nuclear war without differentiating between sides, he seemed to acknowledge that Soviet losses, like the West's, would be a large fraction of the country's population. This theme had been introduced into the Communist party's theoretical journal some months earlier by the military publicist, General Nikolai Talensky, who found it "necessary to

¹ *Pravda*, July 4, 1960.

² *Pravda*, September 19, 1959.

³ *Pravda*, January 15, 1960: "We would have many losses, but . . . the West would suffer incomparably more."

emphasize that a future war, if the aggressors succeed in unleashing it, will lead to such an increase in human losses on both sides that its consequences for mankind might be catastrophic."⁴ Several months later, Talensky expanded this theme in a sensational article in the political journal *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn'* ("International Affairs"), published in Russian and English.⁵ He said that according to careful calculations (which he did not specify) casualties in a world war would be no less than five to six hundred million in the probable main theater, presumably the NATO and Warsaw Pact countries, whose total population he estimated at about eight hundred million. This passage, as well as others in the article, tended to confirm the Soviet people's worst fears regarding the consequences of a new war. Talensky even went so far as to jog his readers' memories of their suffering in the war against Nazi Germany:

Men who lived through the last war recall the terrible destruction of cities which were located in the battle zone. If this degree of destruction is magnified a thousand times and extended over whole continents, then it is possible to form some notion approximating the real consequences of a rocket-nuclear war [pp. 34–35].

Nothing like this had been told the Soviet people before. Talensky claimed no special advantages for the U.S.S.R. in limiting casualties, as had been done in the past.

A few weeks after Talensky's article was sent to the printer, Khrushchev stated that a world war "would lead to the deaths of hundreds and hundreds of millions of people." This same phrase was subsequently employed by Defense Minister Malinovsky, who thus gave it the authority of a serious military estimate.⁶ Khrushchev offered the Soviet people only this chilling reassurance: "We are convinced that mankind will not perish in the event of war."⁷

The main political reason for this retreat in the Soviet public assessment of the strategic balance is not hard to discover. Khrushchev's disagreement on world Communist strategy with the Chinese Communists, and with Mao Tse-tung personally, had erupted in a violent dispute with the representative of the Chinese People's Republic at the Rumanian Communist Party Congress in June, 1960. Talensky seems to have been continuing this polemic in his article by warning the Chinese Communist party, which had criticized leaders

⁴ *Kommunist*, 1960, No. 7, pp. 31–41 [italics added].

⁵ *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn'*, 1960, No. 10, p. 33.

⁶ *Pravda*, June 22, 1961.

⁷ *Pravda*, October 21, 1960.

who were fearful of war, that "to depreciate the peril of rocket-nuclear war is criminal." Khrushchev's assertion that hundreds of millions would die in a nuclear war was made in the days preceding the crucial conference of representatives of Communist parties in Moscow and was repeated in his report on the results of the conference on January 6, 1961.

There was an additional reason for Khrushchev's retreat: America no longer provided the same fertile soil as before for exaggerated Soviet ICBM claims. Although many in the United States disputed or doubted the outgoing administration's assurances that the "missile gap" in the early sixties would be smaller than had earlier been anticipated and would produce no "deterrent gap," the Soviet leaders, knowing the truth, knew also that the United States government was moving closer to it. In his farewell State of the Union message to Congress, President Eisenhower said that "the 'missile gap' shows every sign of being a fiction."⁸ Shortly after the Kennedy administration took office, there were newspaper reports that new studies commissioned by the Defense Department had tentatively shown there was no "missile gap,"⁹ although this was denied by the White House and by Secretary McNamara, who said it would be premature to draw such a conclusion.¹⁰

By failing in his statements during this period to differentiate the peril to the Soviet people from that faced by other peoples, Khrushchev seemed to imply that the strategic balance was one of parity.¹¹ Talensky went even farther toward suggesting this. The United States strategic offensive force was thus accorded a respect that had been denied it only a few months previously. Khrushchev's long-standing boasts, in which he had been joined by Marshal Malinovsky, that the West's bombers were vulnerable to Soviet air defenses had reached their climax in the aftermath of the U-2 incident. He had then asserted that "not a single bomber could get through to its target."

⁸ *New York Times*, January 12, 1961.

⁹ *New York Times*, February 7, 1961.

¹⁰ *New York Times*, February 8, 17, 1961. According to Senator Symington, the national intelligence estimate of Soviet ICBM capabilities in mid-1961 was 50 per cent lower than the number that was projected for that time period in August, 1960; a "missile gap" apparently remained, but a much smaller one than had originally been projected (United States, Senate, *Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services on Department of Defense Programs and Authorization of Appropriations for Procurement of Aircraft, Missiles, and Naval Vessels by the Armed Forces* [S. 2734], 87th Cong., 2d sess., p. 49).

¹¹ The claim that the U.S.S.R. was militarily the world's strongest power, however, continued to be voiced sporadically.

The West's "whole military concept of attack on the Soviet Union, based on the use of bomber planes [has] been shattered."¹²

The confidence expressed earlier by the Soviet leaders in the effectiveness of the U.S.S.R.'s air defenses was undoubtedly a deliberate exaggeration for deterrent purposes. By the end of 1960, however, even if the Soviet claim that the SAC bomber force was vulnerable to Soviet air defenses had been valid, it would not have provided an adequate basis for denying the effectiveness of the United States strategic offensive force. By that time, the Atlas ICBM was operational, as was the first nuclear submarine armed with Polaris missiles;¹³ and SAC bombers had begun to be armed with air-to-surface cruise missiles. This was recognized in a key article by Lieutenant General S. Krasilnikov, who spoke of the need for supplementary means of strategic defense:

Anti-air and anti-rocket defense, which are charged with protecting the rear and the troops, acquire extremely great importance. Destruction of the enemy nuclear rocket [that is, missiles carrying nuclear warheads], nuclear aviation [that is, bombers carrying nuclear bombs], and rocket-carrying forces [presumably bombers and submarines capable of launching missiles with nuclear warheads] will become one of the primary missions.¹⁴

Soviet leaders' claims for their strategic offensive forces in this period stressed the availability of large numbers of thermonuclear warheads but were strikingly vague and evasive as to the means of delivering them, particularly against the United States. The Soviet Union was still said to be "superior in the most up-to-date and effective means of delivering nuclear weapons, intercontinental ballistic missiles."¹⁵ Khrushchev spoke of a plant from which he saw rockets coming "like sausages from an automatic machine, rocket after rocket," though he did not say that the rockets were ICBM's. But in characterizing the strategic balance, Khrushchev and the Soviet marshals asserted no more than that the United States was no longer invulnerable and must take that into account in its calculations. This was an old theme, which only served to mark the retrogression from Khrushchev's bold claims of the winter of 1960. There was still an echo of them in Khrushchev's speech in Sverdlovsk (March 2, 1961): "The Soviet Union has the world's most powerful

¹² *Pravda*, May 29, 1960.

¹³ President Eisenhower's State of the Union message, January 12, 1961.

¹⁴ *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 18, 1960.

¹⁵ Khrushchev's speech to the United Nations General Assembly, September 23, 1960.

rocketry and has produced the quantity of atomic and hydrogen bombs necessary to wipe the aggressors from the face of the earth. . . ." ¹⁶ As can be seen, however, it was a faint echo. Khrushchev now spoke of the "necessary" quantity of nuclear *bombs* but said nothing of the quantity of *rockets* available, only describing them as the world's most powerful. Moreover, he claimed only that "the aggressors," not the countries that were hostile to the Soviet camp, could be wiped from the face of the earth. Thus, the retreat in Soviet strategic claims that was evident after the U-2 incident continued and became even more pronounced in the winter of 1961. For a time Soviet leaders continued to claim that the U.S.S.R. was the strongest military power in the world, but they did not assert that they possessed what that boast necessarily implied—a large quantity of weapon-delivery vehicles capable of striking at the chief adversary. ¹⁷ Subsequently, in the fall of 1961, when American officials began to express strong confidence that the United States had a considerable margin of superiority in strategic forces over the U.S.S.R., Soviet leaders had already ceased to claim over-all military superiority.

¹⁶ Khrushchev, *Stroitel'stvo kommunizma v SSSR i razvitie sel'skogo khoziaistva* ["The Building of Communism in the USSR and the Development of Agriculture"] (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1963), Vol. V, p. 128.

¹⁷ An exception was Marshal Grechko's V-E Day article, which accurately quoted Khrushchev's claim of a rocket capability to wipe any hostile country from the face of the earth (*Pravda*, May 9, 1961).

COLLAPSE OF THE "MISSILE GAP" AFTER SEPTEMBER, 1961

IN SEPTEMBER, 1961, reports began to appear in the American press that new intelligence estimates were crediting the Soviet Union with but a fraction of the number of operational ICBM's that had previously been projected for mid-1961. Projections had reportedly been pared down annually in American estimates since 1959, which had resulted in a progressive narrowing of the "missile gap" expected in the sixties.¹ According to press reports, the new estimates altogether eliminated the gap. Joseph Alsop, who throughout the "missile gap" controversy had criticized official United States estimates as too conservative, was among the first columnists to report on the new intelligence reappraisal. He wrote on September 25, 1961:

Prior to the recent recalculation the maximum number of ICBMs that the Soviets were thought to have at this time was on the order of 200—just about enough to permit the Soviets to consider a surprise attack on the United States. The maximum has now been drastically reduced, however, to less than a quarter of the former figure—well under 50 ICBMs and, therefore, not nearly enough to allow the Soviets to consider a surprise attack on this country. The number of Soviet heavy bombers of intercontinental range meanwhile remains unchanged, at about 150.²

As noted previously, other press reports of that time cited similar figures, most frequently ranging from thirty-five to seventy-five Soviet ICBM's.³ Even these figures exaggerated the size of the Soviet ICBM force: the United States Defense Department estimated several years later that the U.S.S.R. had actually deployed only "a handful" of ICBM's by 1961.⁴

About a month after these press reports first appeared, they were implicitly confirmed by high administration officials. On October 21, 1961, Deputy Defense Secretary Roswell Gilpatric delivered the first in what turned out to be a series of speeches and statements on the strategic balance by high-ranking officials of the government. Although the administration leaders did not then refer explicitly to the

¹ For the changing estimates, as provided to the Senate Armed Services Committee by Senator Symington, see pp. 35–36.

² *Washington Post*, September 25, 1961.

³ See p. 35, n. 1.

⁴ See p. 37, n. 7.

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revised intelligence estimates of Soviet intercontinental capabilities, it was evident that their new appraisal of the strategic balance rested heavily upon them. What distinguished the new pronouncements from past public evaluations of the strategic balance was the unequivocal character of the claim that the United States enjoyed a wide and growing margin of strategic superiority over the U.S.S.R. and the evident confidence with which the claim was expressed.⁵ Thus Secretary Gilpatric declared that even after absorbing a Soviet surprise attack the surviving United States forces would probably be greater than the forces used by the U.S.S.R. in its first strike. "In short," he said, "we have a second-strike capability which is at least as extensive as what the Soviets can deliver by striking first."⁶

The confident assertions of United States strategic superiority in Gilpatric's speech and in subsequent ones by Secretary McNamara and other high officials reflected a top-level decision by the new Kennedy administration to correct the erroneous public impression of the unfavorable strategic balance that had gained currency in the previous three or four years. According to McGeorge Bundy, special assistant to the President for national security affairs:

The new President himself had feared the missile gap and had pressed his concern in the campaign. It was with honest surprise and relief that in 1961 he found the situation much less dangerous than the best evidence available to the Senate had indicated the year before. His Administration moved at once to correct the public impression, and thereafter, throughout his term, he encouraged and supported policies of action and exposition which aimed to ensure not merely that American strategic power was sufficient—but that its sufficiency was recognized.⁷

The new appraisal of Soviet intercontinental nuclear capabilities implicitly raised a question as to the credibility of past Soviet strategic claims. Secretary Gilpatric made this explicit when he stated:

We doubt that the Soviet leadership has in fact any less realistic views, although this may not always be apparent from their extravagant claims. While the Soviets use rigid security as a military weapon their Iron Curtain is not so impenetrable as to force us to accept at face value the Kremlin's boasts.

⁵ Secretary McNamara later expressed himself as "absolutely confident" that the myth of the missile gap was and had been a myth. Acknowledging that there was always a margin of error in such matters, he said that "the margin of error is much less than the margin of our superiority" (*Saturday Evening Post*, December 1, 1962, p. 18).

⁶ *New York Times*, October 22, 1961.

⁷ Bundy, "The Presidency and the Peace," *Foreign Affairs*, XLII (April, 1964), 354.

The Soviet leaders had chosen to ignore the earlier American press reports about the United States intelligence revisions, but they could ignore such a direct, high-level challenge only at the risk of permitting their silence to be taken for assent, the consequences of which might have far-reaching political implications. They quickly evaluated the series of speeches by administration leaders as a concerted effort to bring United States strategic superiority to bear politically on outstanding issues between the United States and the U.S.S.R., notably on the Berlin dispute.⁸ The initial response of the Soviet leaders was prompt and angry but lacked real substance. Addressing the Twenty-second Party Congress in Moscow two days after the Gilpatric speech, Soviet Defense Minister Malinovsky declared:

On October 21 of this year—that is quite recently, Roswell Gilpatric, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense, apparently not without President Kennedy's knowledge, addressed a Business Council in Virginia. Brandishing the might of the United States, he threatened us with force. What can one say to this one more threat, to this petty statement? One can say just one thing: This threat does not frighten us.⁹

In the months that followed, the Soviet leaders elaborated a new policy to replace the one that had been nullified by exposure of their ICBM deception. The changes that were introduced tended to confirm the correctness of the new American appraisal of Soviet ICBM capabilities and revealed the concern that the Soviet leaders must have felt about the possible consequences of this reappraisal for Soviet foreign policy. After September, 1961, Soviet strategic pronouncements sought primarily to minimize the loss to Soviet political influence and military stature caused by the collapse of the missile gap myth. A new stage in the continuing East-West dialogue on strategic matters was thus initiated, a stage in which the Soviet leaders, for the first time in almost half a decade, found themselves on the defensive. In this chapter we shall deal with the major elements of the revised Soviet declaratory policy as it took shape after September, 1961.

Although the Soviet leaders did not allow the new United States appraisal of the strategic balance to go unchallenged, they responded

⁸ "One's attention is drawn to the circumstance that what is under discussion on this occasion is not the speech of a single wild general or politician who has lost his equilibrium but a clearly organized campaign whose aim, judging by everything, is to intimidate the Soviet Union and exacerbate still further the international situation" (Radio Moscow Home Service commentary, November 16, 1961).

⁹ *Pravda*, October 24, 1961.

publicly in such a way as to evade the crucial question of the number of Soviet ICBM's that were operational. The main objective of the Soviet response was evidently to deprive American claims of superiority of their political value by re-emphasizing that the Soviet Union had an adequate retaliatory capability, even if the Soviet intercontinental strike force was quantitatively smaller than the West had been led to believe.¹⁰ Claims of Soviet military superiority, muted since the U-2 incident, were now virtually abandoned. There was a marked tendency to move from the military plane to the political in comparing the two sides. Khrushchev, for example, in a May 18, 1962, speech in Sofia, declared:

Our strength today is not illusory but is enormous and real. The President of the United States himself said to me that our military forces were equal. I made no objection to this although we are in fact stronger than imperialism, because our forces include not only the socialist states but all progressive and peace-loving forces on earth, all people who hold peace dear. These peace-loving forces are greater than the forces of imperialism.¹¹

Similarly, in his formal report to the Twenty-second Party Congress in October, 1961, Khrushchev had stated that "now the forces of socialism, all the forces which support the struggle for peace, are more powerful than the aggressive imperialist forces."¹² These were general statements on the broad political balance of forces in the world rather than on the military balance alone; they added to the forces of the Soviet camp such non-military factors as the neutralist countries and the "peace" forces within capitalist nations. In speaking of the military balance itself, Khrushchev in a March, 1962, speech in Moscow referred to it only to remark that the United States had lost its monopoly of nuclear weapons and other types of modern arms.¹³ Thus he reverted to an argument advanced half a decade earlier, when Soviet strategic nuclear capability was just emerging.

In the spring of 1962, after publication in an American magazine of an interview with President John F. Kennedy on strategic matters¹⁴—interpreted by the Soviet press as an effort to intimidate the U.S.S.R.

¹⁰ A subsidiary theme, implying the possibility of Soviet pre-emption, is discussed below, pp. 91–93. As employed by Khrushchev, this theme also seemed designed to prevent the United States from deriving political advantages from threats to take the nuclear initiative.

¹¹ *Pravda*, May 19, 1962. In the live broadcast of the speech, Khrushchev actually recalled saying to the President: "It is nice of you to say this, but . . ." (Sofia Domestic Service, May 18, 1962; italics added).

¹² *Pravda*, October 18, 1961.

¹³ *Pravda*, March 17, 1962.

¹⁴ *Saturday Evening Post*, March 31, 1962.

by threatening a United States first strike "under certain circumstances"—there was a temporary renewal of explicit claims of broad Soviet military superiority, although direct comparisons of Soviet and American intercontinental strike capabilities were avoided. Thus, *Pravda's* "Observer" reiterated the 1961 claim that "in military power, the Soviet Union surpasses the U.S.A." but also advanced a new formulation, repeated on several occasions by Soviet leaders in the early spring: "[In] its ability to deliver a massive nuclear blow the Soviet Union today surpasses the United States."¹⁵ No specific targets were mentioned, and the claim was presumably based on Soviet strike capabilities against the European NATO countries, which United States leaders had publicly conceded were very powerful, as well as their intercontinental forces. Thus, superiority was claimed in the aggregate, but not necessarily in each of its parts, and especially not in the most crucial one—capability to deliver ICBM's in quantity to the United States.

In a major speech on military affairs in July, 1962, Khrushchev explicitly noted the changed character of American pronouncements on the strategic balance, terming the new American appraisal "groundless." However, he refuted it, not by reaffirming Soviet superiority, but by arguing that the military balance of power could be determined only during the course of war and ultimately by its outcome.¹⁶ He recalled that Hitler had claimed an overwhelming preponderance of force but was "finally" defeated by the U.S.S.R. and its allies. Significantly, Khrushchev did not deny that Hitler's forces were superior to the U.S.S.R.'s when the war began—a point now conceded by Soviet leaders and attributed to Stalin's prewar errors and miscalculations—but recalled only that Hitler was ultimately defeated.¹⁷

A new characteristic of Soviet statements regarding the strategic balance after mid-1961 was their explicitly expressed readiness to accept strategic parity as the basic assumption from which political settlements should proceed. The theme that equal strategic forces should be translated into equal political rights was introduced by

¹⁵ *Pravda*, March 31, 1962.

¹⁶ *Pravda*, July 11, 1962.

¹⁷ Marshal of the Soviet Union A. I. Yeremenko had written earlier that, although superiority in military preparedness had not proved decisive in the past, "today the center of gravity has to a large if not decisive extent shifted to the opening stage of a war." The present Soviet government, he wrote, "is doing all in its power to remove any possibility of the recurrence of the state of affairs which existed in the first stages of the Great Patriotic War" (*Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn'*, 1962, No. 1, p. 38).

Khrushchev in his speech of July 8, 1961, at a Kremlin reception for graduates of Moscow military academies, in which he stated that strategic parity was now conceded by the West. "However, the necessary conclusions are not being drawn from this fact. With equal forces, there must be equal rights and opportunities. . . ." ¹⁸

In his radio and television speech on the Berlin crisis on August 7, 1961, Khrushchev said that President Kennedy had acknowledged during their talks in Vienna that the military forces of the two sides were equal.¹⁹ The Soviet Premier reverted to the President's alleged concession on numerous occasions during 1961 and 1962; he referred to it, almost nostalgically, even after the President's *Saturday Evening Post* interview:

There was a time when Eisenhower, the former U.S. President, and the present President Kennedy, had a realistic attitude, stating that the military strength of the Soviet Union and of the United States was equal. President Kennedy expressed such an attitude during the meeting with me in Vienna.²⁰

On another occasion when he recalled the President's statement, Khrushchev added that, although he personally believed the Soviet side to be stronger, he was prepared to act as if the forces were actually equal, since such beliefs could be verified only by war.²¹ Thus, instead of playing upon the West's uncertainty regarding Soviet strategic forces, Khrushchev now began to speak of an uncertainty that was intrinsic to the strategic balance. Marshal Malinovsky adopted a similar line in January, 1962, when he replied to congressional testimony by Secretary McNamara:

Here I should like to correct Mr. McNamara. U.S. President John Kennedy once admitted that our strength is equal. *This was a more or less correct acknowledgment*, and it is high time that the American military leaders drew appropriate conclusions from it. I hold that today the socialist camp is stronger than these countries [United States and its NATO allies], *but let us even presume that the forces are equal. We are ready to agree to this* so as not to take part in stirring up a war psychosis. But since our forces are equal the American leaders should come to correct conclusions and pursue a reasonable policy.²²

The new Soviet readiness to settle for mutual acknowledgment of parity was accompanied by a change in the character of claims

¹⁸ *Pravda*, July 9, 1961.

¹⁹ *Pravda*, August 8, 1961.

²⁰ *Pravda*, July 19, 1962.

²¹ *Pravda*, September 9, 1961.

²² *Pravda*, January 25, 1962 [italics added].

regarding the Soviet nuclear capability against the United States. The emphasis shifted from the *magnitude* of destruction that could be inflicted to the *certainty* that retaliation would occur. The formulation "wipe from the face of the earth," which Khrushchev had applied in 1959 and 1960 to any hostile *country* that might attack the U.S.S.R., was now applied, in regard to the United States, only to certain categories of *targets*; however, it continued to be applied to whole countries allied to the United States.

A striking expression of the Soviet retreat from the 1959-60 claim was the tacit revision of it by the then commander-in-chief of Soviet rocket troops, Marshal K. Moskalenko. Referring back to the Supreme Soviet session at which Khrushchev made the original claim, Moskalenko wrote:

A definitive characterization of the might of the rocket troops was given at the Fourth Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet—our country has means which can "literally wipe from the face of the earth *entire states*" if they should try to attack us.²³

This claim now asserted no more than what had been claimed countless times by Soviet spokesmen for several years prior to 1960.

Country-busting claims now specified the European NATO countries. Typical of the new Soviet emphasis on the certainty of retaliation, and of Soviet failure to delineate the level of destruction that could be inflicted against the United States, was the following statement by Marshal Biriuzov:

If the U.S. imperialists who are threatening the Soviet people with thermonuclear war should dare to unleash one *they will have to pay for it*. Neither the oceans surrounding the shores of North America nor the deepest atomic shelters now so strenuously advertised by the monopolistic press *will save them from just and inevitable retribution*.²⁴

Defense Secretary McNamara may have had this retreat on the part of the Soviet leadership in mind when he said on February 17, 1962: "Today not even the most boastful Russian rocket-rattler asserts that the Soviet Union has the nuclear power to destroy the United States."²⁵

The Soviet rejoinder four days later avoided a direct refutation but

²³ *Krasnaia zvezda*, September 13, 1961 [italics added]. This was the second time that Moskalenko had amended Khrushchev's claim, each time weakening its allusion to Soviet ICBM capabilities. See p. 65 for the previous instance.

²⁴ *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, October 3, 1961 [italics added].

²⁵ News release, No. 239-62, United States Department of Defense, Office of Public Affairs, February 17, 1962.

emphasized instead Secretary McNamara's acknowledgment that the Soviet Union could inflict serious damage on Western Europe. As for the United States, the Defense Ministry newspaper warned vaguely that America would be unable "to escape at the expense of Western Europe" if it started a nuclear war.²⁶ *except it!*

Prior to the spring of 1962, Soviet strategic pronouncements stressed the capacity of the U.S.S.R. to destroy American cities but avoided explicit references to military targets in the United States such as had appeared in Soviet statements before September, 1961. Immediately after publication of President Kennedy's interview in the *Saturday Evening Post* (March 31, 1962), however, such references began to reappear in Soviet statements.²⁷ In May, 1962, Defense Minister Malinovsky, replying to President Kennedy's nuclear initiative statement, gave a new formulation for targets in the United States that significantly emended his previously stated position.

JANUARY, 1962

On my part, I could state that we are capable of wiping from the face of the earth with one rocket-nuclear blow any targets, *all the industrial and administrative-political centers of the U.S.A.*²⁸

MAY, 1962

No "pre-emptive" blows of any kind, no defensive measures of any kind, could enable the imperialists to avert an all-destructive retaliatory blow against *economic, transportation, military, and administrative centers of the U.S.A.*²⁹

This inconsistency or change in Soviet targeting statements may have reflected uncertainty or differences among the Soviet leaders on how best to cope with the new American pronouncements on nuclear war strategy. In their public statements, Soviet leaders were concerned with two related elements in the new American position: (1) the doctrine of "controlled nuclear response" and (2) the President's allusion to a United States first strike "under certain circumstances."

Regarding the first, Soviet declaratory policy then as now stressed that a strategy of "city-sparing" was infeasible and that the U.S.S.R., if attacked, would in any event respond with all-out retaliation. Replying in February, 1962, to a speech by Secretary McNamara in which three alternative American nuclear war strategies had been set forth, *Krasnaia zvezda* warned that the United States would have

²⁶ *Krasnaia zvezda*, February 21, 1962.

²⁷ For example, in the reply of *Pravda's* "Observer" to President Kennedy, March 31, 1962.

²⁸ *Pravda*, January 25, 1962 [italics added].

²⁹ *Kommunist*, 1962, No. 7, p. 13 [italics added].

"neither the time nor the opportunity" to choose among these alternatives in the event of war.³⁰ A Radio Moscow military commentator asserted that if the West were to attack the Soviet Union "no appeals that blows should be directed only at military objectives could prevent the all-devastating counter-blow at the economic, transportation, military and administrative centers of the United States and its allies."³¹

Khrushchev himself attacked the United States Defense Secretary's June 16 Ann Arbor speech on "controlled response" as "a monstrous [proposal], permeated from beginning to end with hatred of people and mankind," charging that it sought "to legalize nuclear warfare and thereby the death of millions and millions of people."³² The McNamara strategy, Khrushchev asserted, was designed to divert the main Soviet blow away from the United States and onto the territory of those countries where American overseas bases were located. He argued further that it was meant to deceive the American people as well, because bases in the United States were in or near large cities.

A nuclear-rocket war completely erases boundaries between front and rear. Moreover, it will be *first of all* the civilian population that will fall victim to the weapons of mass annihilation.

As long as they were confident that their opponents credited them with an assured massive second-strike capability, the Soviet leaders were content with a declaratory policy that threatened to destroy American cities in a second strike, even if the United States should attempt to spare Soviet cities in a first strike. But after it became evident that United States leaders had revised their estimates of Soviet strategic capabilities, the confidence of Soviet leaders may have been shaken. In particular, Moscow interpreted President Kennedy's statement on "nuclear initiative" as an effort to bring political pressure to bear on the U.S.S.R. (for example, to abandon the Berlin offensive) by threatening a first strike "under certain circumstances." Apparently recognizing that such threats implicitly questioned the capacity of the U.S.S.R. to retaliate effectively after suffering a first strike, Khrushchev responded by hinting at the possibility of Soviet pre-emption, although he was careful to express his reluctance to engage the United States in a race to strike first. In a speech in Sofia on May 18, the Soviet Premier said:

³⁰ February 21, 1962.

³¹ Radio Moscow, June 29, 1962.

³² *Pravda*, July 11, 1962 [italics added].

We cannot ignore the statement made by Mr. Kennedy because it introduces a new element in the relations between our countries. Does not this statement mean that the U.S. President wishes to urge me, as the head of the Soviet government, to compete with him in who will be the first to "push the button"? We are against any such competition. It must be clear to every clear-thinking man how dangerous, inhuman, and unwise this would be. Knowing the aggressive character of imperialism, we must keep our powder dry and be in fitting readiness.³³

He expatiated on this theme again in July:

Certain responsible statesmen in America even declare openly their readiness to take upon themselves "the initiative in a nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union." Ponder these words. This is not only a threat of thermonuclear war, but also an imposition of a sinister competition as to who will be the first to start such a war. Since they are saying that they may be the first to unleash war, they are, as it were, prompting other countries: hurry up, they say, in order to forestall [*upredit'*] the enemy. Where can this lead? It is clear to everyone: to catastrophic consequences.³⁴

Khrushchev may have been brought to respond so sharply to the President's remarks by the previously expressed concern of his military advisers. Public allusions by high-ranking Soviet military officials to the danger of an American surprise attack, first noted in the Soviet literature during the 1954-55 discussions on the revision of Stalinist military doctrine, had been revived in the fall of 1961 after a lapse of several years:

We cannot sit with folded hands and look on with indifference at the way in which the ruling circles of Western powers are pushing the world toward war. We do not want to find ourselves in the position in which we were in 1941. This time we shall not allow the imperialists to catch us unawares.—MARSHAL MALINOVSKY.³⁵

We cannot and will not be in the same situation as we were at that time [June, 1941].—MARSHAL GRECHKO.³⁶

We must constantly sharpen [our vigilance] in order to frustrate the plans of the imperialists for a surprise attack on our country and to prevent a repetition of the sorry lessons of the initial period of the last war.—GENERAL OF THE ARMY A. S. ZHADOV.³⁷

We will not let 1941 happen again, nor let the imperialists take us unawares.—MARSHAL S. S. BIRIUZOV.³⁸

³³ *Pravda*, May 19, 1962.

³⁴ *Pravda*, July 11, 1962.

³⁵ *Pravda*, September 14, 1961.

³⁶ *Krasnaia zvezda*, September 6, 1961.

³⁷ *Krasnaia zvezda*, September 20, 1961.

³⁸ *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, October 3, 1961.

Finally, Defense Minister Malinovsky, in his speech at the Party Congress in October, stated flatly that the West was preparing a "surprise nuclear attack" against the Soviet Union. Therefore, he declared,

Soviet military doctrine considers that the most important, the main and first-priority task of the armed forces is: to be in constant readiness reliably to repel an enemy surprise attack and to frustrate his criminal designs.³⁹

Later, in discussing the training of the armed forces, he specified "the timely delivery of a destructive blow" on the enemy as the means to "frustrate his aggressive designs." This formulation, or variations of it, was later repeated both by Malinovsky and by Soviet writers on military doctrine.⁴⁰ They spoke of the need for a capability to deal "timely blows" as a tenet of Soviet military doctrine. Khrushchev, on the other hand, warned of the possibility that United States declaratory policy might compel him, despite his fear of the catastrophic consequences, "to engage the U.S. President in a sinister competition as to who will be the first to start a war." In expressing his concern about American efforts to derive political advantage from references to the nuclear initiative, Khrushchev once again demonstrated his extreme sensitivity to changes in the declaratory policy of the United States on strategic matters.

Although Soviet claims as to the damage that the U.S.S.R. could inflict upon the United States were tempered after the fall of 1961, analogous claims regarding Western Europe were now stated even more baldly. In September, 1961, *Izvestiia* took the unusual step of reprinting the text of the *New York Times* version of an interview granted by Khrushchev to C. L. Sulzberger, which contained the

³⁹ *Pravda*, October 24, 1961.

⁴⁰ For example, Malinovsky in *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 11, 1961, and *Kommunist*, 1962, No. 7. In his *Kommunist* article he retreated from his original position by introducing revisions that largely deprived the formulation of its pre-emptive connotations. He omitted the reference to "timely" blows and implied that frustrating "the enemy's criminal designs" was a peacetime objective. "This means that our defensive might must be such as to be able to instill in the aggressor uncertainty as to the outcome of the war planned by him, to nip in the bud his criminal designs and finally, if war should become a fact, decisively to destroy the aggressor" (*Kommunist*, p. 15; italics added). However, Malinovsky's original Twenty-second Party Congress formulation was repeated verbatim in articles published at the same time in the Central Committee journal for the armed forces and in the Defense Ministry newspaper (Colonel General N. Lomov, in *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, 1962, No. 10, pp. 19-20; and Colonel I. Sidelnikov, in *Krasnaia zvezda*, May 11, 1962). Moreover, *Krasnaia zvezda* stated editorially two months later (July 7, 1962) that the foremost duty of Soviet officers "is to be in constant readiness to repel an enemy surprise attack and to frustrate his criminal designs by means of the timely delivery of a destructive blow."

following brutal reference to the Western European allies of the United States as Soviet hostages:

Khrushchev believes absolutely that when it comes to a showdown, Britain, France and Italy would refuse to join the United States in a war over Berlin for fear of their absolute destruction. Quite blandly he asserts that these countries are, figuratively speaking, hostages to the USSR and a guarantee against war.⁴¹

Khrushchev's remark implied that the U.S.S.R. was relying on the mortal threat against countries allied to the United States to mobilize Western European pressure on the United States to avoid policies that risked general war. On this view, the crucial question in the United States-Soviet military balance was whether the United States could prevent the Soviet Union from destroying Western Europe, not whether the United States could destroy the U.S.S.R. while preserving its own people and resources. Clearly, this strategic concept has serious military and political limitations. In the final analysis, there is a contradiction between a military strategy that relies heavily on deterring the United States by holding its allies as hostages and a political strategy that aims at detaching the allies from the United States, thus diminishing the value of the allies as hostages. But whatever its political limitations, such a strategic concept requires that the allies continue to credit the U.S.S.R. with the capability of inflicting devastation upon them, regardless of changes in their beliefs about the United States-Soviet military balance. Soviet concern to assure this minimum condition has been reflected in the disproportionate buildup of Soviet continental nuclear striking power (MRBM's, IRBM's, and medium bombers) as compared with intercontinental nuclear forces.

Insofar as NATO allies of the United States were inclined to accept the revised United States appraisal of the strategic balance, the task of the Soviet leaders, in accordance with the "hostage" strategy, was to persuade allied leaders and publics that even United States strategic superiority could not prevent the destruction of their countries in the event of war. This, indeed, had been the crux of the Soviet position before the U.S.S.R. was credited with a strategic capability against the United States, and it was now employed again.⁴²

⁴¹ *Izvestiia*, September 9, 1961.

⁴² Khrushchev had put it bluntly to the West Germans in 1959: "[Western military men] say they have more bombers than the Soviet Union. They allege that the Soviet Union has few intercontinental rockets. They would have you believe that the United States stands to lose least from a war. Even if this were true, does this make you Germans feel any better?" (*Pravda*, May 9, 1959).

In a broadcast beamed to Japan early in 1962, for example, Radio Moscow alluded to reports circulating in Japan regarding the revised American appraisal of the strategic balance. The broadcast went on to say:

We do not know where . . . these data were obtained. However, it is certain that even if one exaggerates the military strength of a superior [*sic*] power that is signatory of the Security Treaty and boasts of its superiority, *the danger that the Security Treaty has brought to Japan will not decrease at all*. . . . Recall the statement of Soviet Defense Minister Malinovsky. He said that the Soviet Union with its nuclear rockets is capable of annihilating with one blow those countries which have permitted other countries to maintain military bases in areas adjacent to the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.⁴³

A similar line in regard to Turkey was taken by the commander-in-chief of the Soviet navy, Admiral S. G. Gorshkov, in a *Pravda* interview on February 2, 1962. Referring to a speech by British Admiral Sir Deric Holland-Martin, in which the NATO Mediterranean fleet commander pledged that NATO forces would come immediately to Turkey's assistance in the event of a Soviet attack, Gorshkov replied:

If Turkey continues to fulfill the role to which it has been assigned in the plans of the military blocs of NATO and CENTO, then, in the event of [war], a nuclear rocket blow will, of course, be inflicted on Turkey. After this, the "assistance" which Admiral Holland-Martin so generously promises to Turkey will certainly not be asked for, because it will not be needed by anyone.

The revised United States estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities induced a more favorable public appraisal of weapons that Soviet leaders had formerly downgraded. As already noted, Soviet leaders and particularly Khrushchev began publicly to depreciate manned bombers immediately after the U.S.S.R. launched the first Sputnik, although bombers were then the sole means available for delivering nuclear bombs against United States targets. In January, 1960, Khrushchev had announced to the Supreme Soviet that "almost the entire military air force is being replaced by missiles." He said that the Soviet Union had already sharply reduced and would probably further reduce and even discontinue production of bombers "and other obsolete equipment." ⁴⁴ At that time Khrushchev was apparently willing to sacrifice credit for the U.S.S.R.'s limited heavy bomber

⁴³ Radio Moscow, January 31, 1962 [italics added].

⁴⁴ *Pravda*, January 15, 1960.

capability in order to enhance the political value of Soviet progress in developing the ICBM. But as evidence mounted that United States leaders did not credit the U.S.S.R. with the large ICBM capability that Khrushchev had claimed, "supplementary" offensive weapons systems, such as manned bombers and missile-launching submarines, again became prominent in Soviet claims. This was evident as early as the summer of 1961, when new air-to-surface missiles were displayed at the annual Soviet air show. At that time, too, Soviet leaders asserted for the first time that the Soviet Union had built nuclear submarines "in no smaller quantity" than the United States.⁴⁵

Beginning in the fall of 1961, Soviet statements typically listed their entire arsenal of long-range delivery means, not just land-based missiles. Occasionally, land-based missiles were denied precedence, as in a statement by Marshal Biriuzov, who went so far as to rescue surface naval craft from the oblivion to which Khrushchev had consigned them years earlier:

We must mention that we also have reliable means for delivering such superpowerful warheads. We have super-long-range rocket-carrying aircraft, warships equipped with rockets of various classes, and high-speed submarines with atomic power plants and practically unlimited range. Our rocket troops have powerful intercontinental ballistic rockets and complex radio-electronic equipment to control their flight.⁴⁶

Khrushchev himself reflected the shift away from exclusive emphasis on missiles when he said in his report to the Twenty-second Party Congress: "In equipping the armed forces with rockets and an atomic submarine fleet, we are not leaving the air force out of our reckoning; we are continuing to develop and improve it."⁴⁷

The reintroduction of manned bombers into Soviet strategic claims, when considered in the light of the revised United States estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities, gave the impression, not of an addition to strategic power, but rather of a means to fill the gap between large previous ICBM claims and the smaller force now credited to the U.S.S.R. Moreover, the Soviet admission of continued reliance on manned bombers effected a qualitative change in projected Soviet claims regarding the weapons balance. Previously, the Soviet leaders had sought to portray the strategic situation as essen-

⁴⁵ See, for example, *Izvestiia*, July 22, 1961. Previously Soviet media had contended that the United States had overrated the advantages of nuclear submarines and that conventional Soviet undersea craft could perform at least as well as American nuclear submarines.

⁴⁶ *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, October 3, 1961.

⁴⁷ *Pravda*, October 18, 1961.

tially a confrontation of a large United States bomber force, which was, however, vulnerable to Soviet air defenses, and a large Soviet ICBM force, which was invulnerable to existing means of defense. In order to depreciate the strategic value of the large United States bomber force, the Soviet leaders questioned the value of manned bombers in general, including their own much smaller force. But the new American intelligence estimates required a change in Soviet declaratory policy. If American leaders now realized that manned bombers, four years after Sputnik, still constituted the main Soviet intercontinental strategic force, it became essential to emphasize that Soviet bombers would be effective in the event of war. The Soviet leaders found a technical basis for their renewed confidence in bombers by claiming and displaying a stand-off cruise missile capability.⁴⁸ This did not, however, provide them with grounds for claiming the U.S.S.R. had acquired a unique capability, since the United States had already equipped much of its B-52 force with cruise missiles (Hound Dogs).

American press reports on the revised estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities and the related administration statements on the strategic balance coincided roughly with the Soviet announcement that the U.S.S.R. had "worked out designs for creating a series of superpowerful nuclear bombs of 20, 30 and 50 and 100 million tons of TNT" (August 30, 1961) and with the detonation of very high-yield thermonuclear devices, including one in the 55-60 megaton range, during the Soviet test series in the fall.⁴⁹ Although the decision to develop and test these high-yield devices clearly antedated the United States intelligence reappraisal in the summer of 1961, the superbombs were to play a prominent role in the Soviet response to American claims growing out of the reappraisal. The Soviet leaders tried to compensate for the West's discovery that the U.S.S.R. still had few intercontinental delivery vehicles by making it appear that they were now able to multiply the destructive capacity of each Soviet weapon

⁴⁸ The argument was spelled out by *Krasnaia zvezda* on November 18, 1961, in an interview with Colonel General of the Engineering-Technical Service A. N. Ponomarev: "Rockets of the air-to-ground class . . . are weapons of bomber aircraft. Such rockets are equipped with a propulsion unit and are capable of developing great speeds independent of the speed of the aircraft which launches them. Thus the bomber not only need not enter the anti-air defense zone of the target, but need not even approach it. Its task is only to bring the rocket to a prearranged point. *It is clear that under these circumstances the vulnerability of the carrying plane will be considerably reduced*" (italics added).

⁴⁹ Atomic Energy Commission Press Release No. 352-D, December 9, 1961.

carrier by fitting it with a super-high-yield warhead. The tendency to shift the focus from the number of rocket carriers to the destructive power of their nuclear cargoes was illustrated in September, 1961, when Khrushchev remarked to Sulzberger that "several such super-powerful bombs at our disposal will considerably increase the defense capacity of our country. . . ." ⁵⁰ A few months later, Khrushchev referred to 50 and 100 megaton Soviet bombs as "a sword of Damocles" that would "hang over the heads of the imperialists when they decide the question whether or not they should unleash war." ⁵¹

It is noteworthy that Marshal Malinovsky, when he asserted at the Twenty-second Party Congress that American specialists had underestimated the level of damage the U.S.S.R. could inflict upon the United States, cited as the source of their alleged error the fact that they had taken as a unit for their calculations "only" a 5 megaton warhead. But "as you already know," he went on, "we have nuclear charges equivalent to several tens of thousands and up to 100 million tons of TNT, and our ballistic rockets have proved to be so splendid no one can doubt their ability to lift and deliver such charges to any point on earth." ⁵² Such doubts did exist, however, and the Soviet leaders failed to dissolve them.

By the end of 1961, the Soviet leaders had recognized that the old claims of strategic superiority based exclusively on the Soviet ICBM force were no longer credible. Accordingly, they muted their claims of strategic superiority, expressed readiness to accept strategic parity as the basis for East-West negotiations, scaled down claims about the level of damage that the U.S.S.R. could inflict upon the United States in the event of war, and placed new emphasis on superbombs, manned bombers, and nuclear submarines. At the same time, the Soviet leaders did not explicitly address themselves to the reported United States estimates of the number of operational Soviet ICBM's; they neither confirmed nor directly refuted them. This reticence contrasted with their readiness to refute Western assertions about other aspects of Soviet capabilities. What they said was that United States specialists underestimated both the number and power of Soviet nuclear weapons; ⁵³ that the United States was wrong to doubt that Soviet scientists had created a rocket capable of delivering a 50

⁵⁰ *Pravda*, September 9, 1961 (italics added).

⁵¹ *Pravda*, December 9, 1961.

⁵² *Pravda*, October 24, 1961.

⁵³ *Pravda*, October 24, 1961.

megaton warhead; ⁵⁴ and that the results of Soviet ICBM and MRBM practice launches disproved the contentions of Western observers that Soviet rockets would not perform as well in combat as they had in the Soviet space and missile test programs. ⁵⁵

Beginning in 1961 the Soviet press, in an apparent effort to provide the public with some "tangible" evidence of Soviet missile capabilities, frequently published photographs of objects identified as operational Soviet missiles. Most of the photographs were actually of surface-to-air missiles and short-range surface-to-surface missiles. ⁵⁶ Photographs of what appeared to be medium- or intermediate-range missiles were also occasionally published. ⁵⁷ The object in one such photograph was falsely identified as an "intercontinental" rocket. ⁵⁸ Related to these photographic displays were eye-witness reports by Soviet newspaper correspondents of visits to Soviet "rocket bases" and missile-launching submarines. ⁵⁹

The key words in Soviet claims regarding the size of the ICBM force was that weapons were available in "sufficient" or "necessary" numbers. ⁶⁰ This formulation was apparently adopted as far back as February, 1961, when it was introduced into Armed Forces Day propaganda by Marshals K. S. Moskalenko and I. K. Bagramian, ⁶¹ although it became widely used only after the fall of 1961. At the Twenty-second Party Congress, Marshal Malinovsky specified that the rocket troops had the "necessary quantity" of launching installa-

⁵⁴ *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 18, 1961.

⁵⁵ *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 15, 1961. Marshal Malinovsky said that 90 per cent of all MRBM practice launches and 100 per cent of all ICBM practice firings in 1961 were graded "excellent" or "good," but he did not reveal the absolute number of practice launches.

⁵⁶ See, for example, *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 19, 1961, January 25, 1962, and February 21, 23, 25, 1962; *Pravda*, December 21, 1961, and February 23, 1962.

⁵⁷ See, for example, *Krasnaia zvezda*, October 18, November 10, 1961, and January 25, 1962.

⁵⁸ *Krasnaia zvezda*, February 21, 1962. Not until 1964 were ICBM's publicly displayed in the U.S.S.R.

⁵⁹ See *Izvestiia*, October 10, 1961, for a correspondent's account of a trip aboard a Soviet nuclear submarine. TASS (February 20, 1962) transmitted a report on a correspondent's visit to a rocket base at which he was not shown ICBM's but their "sisters" or "little sisters."

⁶⁰ It was not until January 19, 1963, in the wake of the Cuban missile crisis, that a Soviet spokesman used specific numbers to convey the size of the Soviet strategic missile force. During a speech in East Germany, Khrushchev said in an aside that, although the Soviet Union had withdrawn its medium-range missiles from Cuba, the United States was still covered by other missiles. He mentioned "80, probably 120 missiles." From the context he presumably meant ICBM's, though shorter range submarine-launched missiles might also have been counted. (*Washington Post*, January 20, 1963.)

⁶¹ *Sovetskaia Rossiia* and *Ekonomicheskaiia gazeta*, February 23, 1961.

tions, rockets and charges of multimillion-ton power. Formulations such as this were in effect truncated versions of Khrushchev's January, 1960, claim, which asserted that the U.S.S.R. had enough rockets to "wipe from the earth all of its potential enemies." The post-1960 formulas either said nothing about the purposes for which the number of rockets was "sufficient" or "necessary" or, in some variations, asserted only that they were sufficient to "rout" an enemy or to administer a "due rebuff."

In another, weaker, variant of the formulation, only the quantity of nuclear warheads possessed by the U.S.S.R. was termed "sufficient," whereas the missile portion of the claim was expressed in strictly qualitative terms:

[The Soviet armed forces] have the necessary number of thermonuclear weapons, the most perfect means of delivery—short- and medium-range rockets and intercontinental rockets. . . .⁶²

The Soviet Union has at its disposal not only sufficient stockpiles of the mightiest nuclear weapons in the world, but also the most modern means of delivering them to target.⁶³

The qualitative superiority of Soviet weapons and Soviet primacy in developing new weapons became dominant themes in the Soviet leaders' statements on military affairs. Thus, Marshal Moskalenko wrote that "there are no such intercontinental or other types of rockets [elsewhere] in the world today as are now in the armament of the Soviet Army" and that Soviet weapons are "the most modern in the world."⁶⁴ Marshal Biriuzov boasted: "We have the best weapons, including rockets."⁶⁵ Marshal Malinovsky asserted in May, 1962, that the U.S.S.R. could more than hold its own in "competition for quality of armaments":

Our country possesses perfect military equipment, fully answering the tasks of ensuring defense in contemporary conditions. In the competition for quality of weapons imposed on us by the aggressive forces, we not only do not lag behind those who threaten us with war, but in many respects are even superior to them. In the future, if the arms race is not brought to an end, this superiority will grow.⁶⁶

Publicly, Soviet leaders expressed great satisfaction with the state of the Soviet missile arsenal, without distinguishing between ICBM's,

⁶² Khrushchev statement, *Pravda*, July 9, 1961.

⁶³ "Observer," *Pravda*, March 31, 1962.

⁶⁴ *Krasnaia zvezda*, September 13, 1961.

⁶⁵ *Krasnaia zvezda*, September 23, 1961.

⁶⁶ *Kommunist*, 1962, No. 7.

MRBM's, and other missile types. Khrushchev announced to the Twenty-second Party Congress that "the rearmament of the Soviet army with rocket and nuclear equipment is completely finished." "Our armed forces," he said, "now have at their disposal such powerful weapons as to enable them to crush any aggressor."⁶⁷ Malinovsky conveyed an impression of substantial numbers of weapons when he boasted that some eighteen hundred subunits of the Soviet rocket troops had been graded "excellent."⁶⁸ He did not indicate the ratio of "subunits" of rocket troops to operational missiles, and particularly ICBM's; but the number of "excellent subunits" was impressively large and was used repeatedly in Soviet propaganda during that period.

Malinovsky also told the Party Congress that the output of "rocket armaments" had increased so greatly in recent years "that not only are we completely supplied with rockets of various types and missions, but we have a large surplus." Three months later, the Soviet Defense Minister stated in a *Pravda* interview that the Soviet Union had "no particular need to increase the rocket forces or weapon stockpiles."⁶⁹ "At the present time," he said, "we no longer need to build up the quantity of weapons. Those we have are sufficient to defeat any potential enemy who attacked us or the socialist countries friendly to us."⁷⁰ In the future, Malinovsky continued, it would only be necessary to renew and improve the weapons already available.

As far as the Soviet ICBM force was concerned, these claims were blatantly false: it was only in the months after Malinovsky spoke that the Soviet Union began to acquire a substantial operational ICBM force, based on a second-generation missile.⁷¹ But in a special sense there was some truth in the assertion that missiles able to strike the United States were already available in "sufficient" numbers. Large numbers of medium-range ballistic missiles had been produced in the Soviet Union; and there was now a socialist country from which such missiles could be aimed at the United States. While the Soviet leaders

⁶⁷ *Pravda*, October 18, 1961. The word "army" (*armii*) is used in Russian to denote both the sum total of the armed forces of a state, as in the passage above, where it is employed interchangeably with "armed forces," and more narrowly to signify ground forces, as in the expression, "the Soviet Army, Navy, and Air Forces."

⁶⁸ *Pravda*, October 24, 1961.

⁶⁹ *Pravda*, January 25, 1962.

⁷⁰ The unprecedented reference to "socialist countries friendly to us," implying that there might also be unfriendly socialist countries, was presumably intended as a warning to the Albanian and Chinese Communist leaders that Soviet military support was not automatically at the disposal of all "socialist countries."

⁷¹ See Hanson Baldwin's article in *New York Times*, July 26, 1962; and Allen Dulles, *The Craft of Intelligence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 165.

✓ patched together a new strategic declaratory policy designed to minimize political losses caused by the exposure of their ICBM deception, more substantial efforts were being made to redress the unfavorable military balance. Before analyzing the momentous United States-Soviet confrontation that arose out of the Soviet attempt to deploy strategic weapons in Cuba,⁷² we must first review ✓ the crisis in Soviet foreign policy that led to it and the relation between Soviet foreign policy failures and the ICBM deception.

⁷² See chapters xi and xii.

PART 3

STRATEGIC POWER AND SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY

THE MISSILE DECEPTION IN SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY, 1957-62

FROM THE INITIATION of the Berlin crisis in 1958 until the 1962 encounter in Cuba, the attempt to deceive the West regarding Soviet missile capabilities had a central place in Soviet policy. The deception directly affected Soviet cold-war objectives and the methods used in pursuing them. To understand Soviet foreign policy in those years, therefore, it is necessary to inquire (1) why the Soviet leaders permitted the United States to widen substantially its margin of strategic superiority, even after the U.S.S.R. had acquired the technical means of reducing it, and (2) why they chose to deceive the West regarding the pace and scope of their ICBM program. In what follows, consideration of these questions will provide the basis for a reassessment of Soviet foreign policy since 1957.

First, why were the Soviet leaders willing to tolerate a widening margin of United States strategic superiority after they had acquired the technical means of reducing it? The crucial reason was their confidence in the extreme disinclination of the United States, despite its great and increasing preponderance of intercontinental power, to initiate or provoke general war.

Other considerations played a part. A decision to procure a large number of first-generation, or even second-generation, ICBM's entailed a certain risk that the force might have serious technical deficiencies and, further, might be considerably degraded within a few years by the opponent's countermeasures. New systems already under development probably promised to be superior. In view of the great demands on Soviet resources, the leaders doubtless hesitated to expend the large amounts of funds needed, especially to procure a force that was subject to early obsolescence. Whatever the limitations on Soviet resources and capacities, however, the U.S.S.R. has spent huge sums on air defense and on acquiring an "overkill" capability against Western Europe. Moreover, technical uncertainties as to how the Soviet ICBM would perform were in some degree matched by similar uncertainties about the shorter-range ballistic missiles, which were nevertheless deployed in large numbers.

None of the above-mentioned considerations, nor all of them together, would have led to a Soviet decision to procure a relatively

small ICBM force at a slow pace—which left Soviet intercontinental forces highly vulnerable to United States nuclear attack—had the Soviet leaders not been virtually certain that such an attack would not come. Had there been serious doubt on this score, ordinary prudence would have required the procurement of a sizable force without much delay. Such a force would have been needed to reinforce deterrence of a United States attack and, in the event deterrence failed, to provide a more adequate capability to fight a war. Instead, because of his assurance that there would be no American attack, Khrushchev chose to procure a small force at a slow pace. In so doing, he seemingly reversed the position he had taken in 1954 and 1955, while opposing Malenkov, on the inadequacy of a minimum deterrent.

Khrushchev's subsequent assurance of Soviet security was expressed on various occasions and in various ways.¹ One of the most striking expressions of it occurred in an improvised talk he gave in mid-1962.

What kind of international situation do we have? As for our socialist countries, we consider it good. You will say: "What is good about it if such a row is taking place in the world?" Yes, we shall continue to have struggles. The struggle can assume, so to speak, the shape of high tension, or low tension, but this struggle can stop only when all the means of production are in the hands of the working people. Taking this into account, then, we have a good situation. They frighten us with war, and we frighten them back bit by bit. They threaten us with nuclear arms and we tell them: "Listen, now only fools can do this, because we have them too. . . . So why do foolish things and [try to] frighten us?" This is the situation, and this is why we consider the situation to be good.²

According to the Soviet leader, the situation was "good." His words did not express deep apprehension about the state of the world, about rises in the level of tension; on the contrary, he showed remarkable equanimity. Khrushchev's apparent composure, on this and other occasions contrasts strikingly with the widespread belief in the West that nuclear weapons are a principal cause of international tension.³

Soviet confidence that the West would not attack the U.S.S.R. unless strongly provoked was reflected in two important new doctrines. First, world war is not "fatally inevitable." "In contemporary conditions," according to Khrushchev, "the prospect is opened of achieving peaceful coexistence for the entire period in the course of

¹ See, for example, pp. 53–55.

² Remarks in Maritsa, Bulgaria, on May 15, 1962, broadcast on that date by Sofia domestic radio but not circulated in the Soviet Union.

³ See Myron Rush, "Soviet Policy and International Tension," in *Beyond the Cold War*, ed. Robert A. Goldwin (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1966).

which the social and political problems that now divide the world must be solved."⁴ (As a Communist, of course, the only solution he acknowledged was the world-wide victory of communism.) Second, the victory of socialism in the U.S.S.R. is "final." At the Twenty-first Party Congress Khrushchev had originated the doctrine that there was no longer a force in the world capable of overturning it.

What were the grounds of this confidence that the U.S.S.R. was secure despite the United States preponderance of intercontinental nuclear power? In good measure it was based on experience. For many years the United States had been in a position to destroy the Soviet Union with relative impunity but had not done so. From 1945 until 1952 this had been a potential capability for the most part, but the United States showed itself in no hurry to actualize it. No serious effort was made to procure the forces needed until the Korean War demonstrated Communist willingness to engage in naked aggression. By 1953 the United States had acquired an operational capability to destroy the U.S.S.R. but clearly did not intend to employ it except in a situation of great peril. The Eisenhower administration's doctrine of "massive retaliation," although it clearly worried Khrushchev and his associates when first promulgated in 1954, was in time recognized to portend no basic change in the American strategy of containment. By the middle or late 1950's, when the Soviet leaders took the decision (or, what is more likely, the series of decisions) to program a small ICBM force, they had had time to observe that the mere existence of this massive force was no threat to Soviet security. They had learned to live with SAC. Moreover, despite Soviet propaganda against "the imperialist warmongers," they had also come to recognize that the American leadership was not bellicose. This recognition was acknowledged only in backhanded fashion by Soviet assertions that the United States leaders, prompted by sober realism, not good will, were effectively deterred from initiating nuclear war by fear of Soviet strategic power. In fact, however, the Soviet leaders were not relying on large-scale procurement of such strategic power but on the inhibitions of the American leadership, which in their eyes provided a sufficiently reliable deterrent.

Why, then, did the Soviet leaders try to deceive the United States into believing that their ICBM program was much larger than it actually was? It might be said that the deception was evidently

⁴ Report of the Central Committee to the Twenty-second Party Congress, October 17, 1961, *XXII s'ezd Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuza* ("XXII Congress of the CPSU") (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1962), I, 50. See also *Pravda*, October 18, 1961.

thought necessary in order to ensure against United States nuclear attack; that is, since they had no real capability—a large operational ICBM force—they postulated one to serve as a deterrent. But in that case, the nation's survival was made to depend on a fiction, on a deception that might be found out—as, indeed, in time it was. It seems more likely that, before they undertook the missile deception, the Soviet leaders had become confident that the United States was so strongly inhibited against initiating nuclear war that even exposure of the deception would not jeopardize Soviet security.

The question why the U.S.S.R. undertook the deception of the United States therefore remains. To answer it, we must first consider, although briefly at this point, the effect that modern weapons have had on the conduct of Soviet foreign policy.

The advent of thermonuclear weapons convinced the Soviet leaders that they must avoid actions that appreciably raised the risk of nuclear war. This conviction doubtless played a part in the decision to program only a relatively small ICBM force for the early sixties. Not only were the Soviet leaders convinced that the United States would not initiate nuclear war without cause, but they had also resolved not to give cause. The decision to acquire a relatively small ICBM force, in turn, heightened the Soviet sense of the need for caution, since it meant that the U.S.S.R. would remain markedly inferior in strategic intercontinental power for years to come. As a consequence, a surprise nuclear attack on the United States, which was a major concern of many defense planners in the United States during this period, was in reality out of the question. What is more significant for Soviet foreign policy, marked inferiority in intercontinental forces also ruled out a pre-emptive attack, that is, an attack launched in the belief that the opponent has initiated a nuclear attack or is about to do so. Thus, if at any time events seemed to be moving toward a sharp confrontation with the United States, the U.S.S.R. had no alternative but to back down before the risk of general war became serious.

The Soviet leaders were aware, in view of their limited intercontinental force and the huge striking force available to the Strategic Air Command, that a nuclear war would wipe out the U.S.S.R. Therefore, Soviet deliberations on international affairs almost certainly excluded the very contingency of engaging in such a war. They found it necessary to avoid any action that appreciably raised the risk of general war or that could set off a dangerous series of events that might get out of control. Khrushchev acknowledged this situation almost in so many words:

We always seek to direct the development of events so as to ensure that, while defending the interests of the socialist camp, we do not provide the imperialist provocateurs with a chance to unleash a new world war.⁵

Of course, provocateurs who were seeking a chance to unleash world war could no doubt find it. Had he truly feared such "provocateurs," Khrushchev would surely have procured the means of fighting the war that might be unleashed at any time. The true sense of Khrushchev's remark is contained in the phrase "to direct the development of events." This need to control events extended beyond the immediate situation to the predispositions of the United States "ruling class." Khrushchev wished to avoid actions that might adversely affect American internal politics, possibly bringing to power in Washington "the madmen" who might unleash nuclear war. There is some truth, then, in the declared unwillingness of the U.S.S.R. to "accept the challenge of the imperialists to a *competition* in adventurism and aggressiveness,"⁶ that is, to participate in a series of moves and countermoves that could culminate in war.

Did the policy of avoiding actions that might increase the risk of nuclear war mean that Soviet foreign policy had to be passive or quiescent? The Soviet leaders did not think so. They evidently believed that if they could manage to conceal from the West their extreme unwillingness to risk war it would be possible not only to preserve an offensive posture but actually to increase substantially Soviet pressure in the cold war. To do this it was necessary to deceive the West regarding the strategic balance—in particular, regarding the Soviet ICBM program. This was feasible for two reasons: the manifest success of Soviet space activities, which made the existence of a large ICBM program appear credible; and the closed nature of Soviet society, which made it possible to preserve a large measure of secrecy about military matters. In retrospect it seems clear that the Soviet leaders decided to create a fictitious ICBM force as a means of extracting political concessions from a far more powerful opponent. The object of the missile deception, then, was to make large, possibly decisive, political gains in the cold war by creating the impression that the U.S.S.R. was superior to the United States in intercontinental nuclear forces, without incurring the expense necessary to procure such forces. A double deception was involved, since the object of the *missile deception* was to deceive the West with respect to Soviet

⁵ *Pravda*, January 19, 1961.

⁶ Open letter of the Central Committee to Party Organizations, to All Communists of the Soviet Union, *Pravda*, July 14, 1963 (italics added).

foreign policy, in particular, to make it appear that the U.S.S.R. would risk war if necessary to secure its proclaimed objectives. Thus conceived, the Soviet political strategy based on bluff and deception was born of an unwillingness to incur serious risk of war and an unwillingness to forego gains that might be had without incurring such risk.

In the Soviet view, the success of this strategy did not depend on fully persuading the United States that the U.S.S.R. possessed a powerful intercontinental capability or even that it would have one shortly. What was required was that the United States be highly uncertain regarding the intercontinental forces that might be available to the Soviet leaders in the near future. Moreover, even if, once this "future" had become present, the United States had discovered no reason to doubt its strategic superiority, Soviet strategy would not be defeated so long as the United States continued to be uncertain about the period just ahead.

In the years after 1957 the United States was in fact both uncertain and concerned about the growth of Soviet strategic capabilities. It was therefore predisposed to exaggerate the pace and scope of the Soviet program for acquiring delivery vehicles that could strike the United States. By playing upon this predisposition the Soviet leaders were able to distort the American perception of the strategic balance, and so to meet two key requirements of their strategy: they obscured the overwhelming United States superiority, thereby depriving the United States of confidence in its ability to coerce the U.S.S.R. in a crisis; they concealed the narrow limits imposed on their action by strategic deficiencies and consequently were able to raise groundless apprehensions in the West regarding actions they might take on behalf of declared objectives.

Being uncertain about the strategic nuclear balance, the West found it difficult to assess the aims of particular Soviet moves. Whereas the Soviet leaders could plan their initial moves with confidence that they ran no risk of provoking war, the United States leaders were uncertain as to the risks involved in various alternative countermoves and therefore felt constrained to respond cautiously. This caution, in turn, strengthened Soviet reliance on American restraint in the cold war and increased the U.S.S.R.'s confidence that it could control the risk of war stemming from its actions.

Uncertainty, however, has not always worked to the Soviet advantage. Although uncertainty in the United States regarding the nuclear missile balance made the Soviet strategy of deception feasible, the

execution of that strategy was seriously hampered by the Soviet leaders' uncertainty concerning the further measures they could safely take if their opponents failed to make the concessions they demanded. Soviet confidence that the United States would not risk nuclear war unless its vital interests were immediately jeopardized was matched by Soviet uncertainty about the ways in which the United States would actually define its vital interests when faced by a Soviet challenge. Unlike the American uncertainty, which could be resolved—at least theoretically—by improved intelligence about the size of the operational Soviet intercontinental strike force, the Soviet uncertainty was radical and without remedy since it concerned the purely subjective question of American willingness to risk nuclear war on behalf of interests that were threatened by hostile Soviet action. The answer to this question could not be known, even to the American leaders, unless the matter were put to the test. But testing the willingness of the United States to engage in nuclear war was precisely what the Soviet leaders could not do. Since the threshold of a United States nuclear response was too dangerous a question to explore, the Soviet leaders, short of abandoning their political objectives, could cope with their uncertainty in but one way: by assuming the threshold was relatively low—not so low as to preclude sharp Soviet pressure where the West was vulnerable, but sufficiently low to preclude their use of military force. Along with the sense of security that enabled the Soviet leaders to undertake the strategy of deception, then, there was a sense of peril that limited the boldness with which they could pursue it. Moreover, and this is crucial, they evidently did not believe that the perils involved in a confrontation with the United States could be sufficiently reduced by the rapid acquisition of a large ICBM force.

Thus, the Soviet strategy of deception permitted many kinds of pressure on the West, but only within an area of action that seemed to assure the U.S.S.R. immunity from a confrontation with the West.⁷ This acceptance of limits gave rise to important differences with Communist China and contributed to the split that developed during these years. The Chinese Communists, whether because they discounted the significance of the strategic weapons balance or because they did not realize the full extent of Soviet inferiority, sharply denied the need for the restraint shown by the Soviet leaders.

⁷ There is an amplification of this discussion of the limitations imposed on Soviet foreign policy by strategic inferiority on pp. 185–87.

The disagreement of the two Communist powers on cold war strategy has stemmed in good measure from a disagreement over the amount of pressure that can be exerted by Communist initiatives and retaliatory actions without unduly increasing the risk of thermonuclear war. In this open polemic Soviet leaders have seemed to argue that the danger of general nuclear war is relatively small, or at least controllable, and that so long as Communist policy does not become more aggressive the risk will remain small. Highly provocative Communist actions, however, such as those demanded by Communist China, would seriously increase the likelihood of war.⁸ Chinese Communists have disagreed on both points. First, they say that the evil nature of imperialism creates a greater risk of war than the Soviet leaders will admit.⁹ Next, they argue that no appreciable increase in the likelihood of war would result from stepped-up pressure on the Western world; rather, the opposite. Any policy other than that of vigorous revolutionary struggle "will only encourage the ambitions of the imperialists and increase the danger of world war." Revolutionary wars do not create sparks that can ignite a world conflagration but strengthen "the forces which prevent the imperialists from launching a world war." In contrast to the Russian belief that deterrence of the West depends upon the avoidance of severe political and military shocks, the Chinese leaders assert that the present strategic balance is proof against shocks administered by Communists. The way to lessen the risk of world war, the Chinese Communists imply, is to accept the risk of lesser wars. Mao has been quoted in the Soviet press as having expressed the belief that international tension is good for Communists and bad for the West:

To whom is international tension advantageous? To the United States? To England? To the world proletariat? This poses a problem. I believe that none of us [that is, the Communists] need fear international tension. I personally like international tension. The United States understands that tension, which they themselves have created, is not advantageous to them, because it may force the partisans of peace and the workers of the whole

⁸ The Chinese Communist leaders "apparently hold that the Soviet Union should reply to provocations with provocations, fall into traps set by the wild men from the imperialist camp . . ." (open letter of the Central Committee to Party Organizations, to All Communists of the Soviet Union, *Pravda*, July 14, 1963).

⁹ The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist party has asked, "How can war be abolished?" and answered, on the authority of Lenin, "'By abolishing the division of mankind into classes.' . . . However, certain persons [namely, Khrushchev] now actually hold that it is possible to bring about 'a world . . . without wars' while the system of imperialism . . . still exists. This is sheer illusion" (letter to the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist party of March 30, 1963, in *Pravda*, June 14, 1963).

world to begin to think, and will lead larger numbers of people into the Communist Party. . . . It is necessary to put an end to prejudices, including prejudices relating to international tension. . . . In some countries there exists the prejudice that international tension is unfavorable for the peoples. But in conditions of international tension, Communist parties can develop more rapidly, the tempo of their development can be more rapid.¹⁰

These views, which Mao allegedly expressed in March, 1959, presumably contributed to the Soviet Central Committee's

impression . . . that the leaders of the C.P.C. [Communist Party of China] regard the preservation and intensification of international tension—especially in the relations between the USSR and the U.S.—to be to their advantage.¹¹

For their part, the Chinese Communists have accused the Soviet leaders of having ceased to be revolutionaries because of fear of nuclear war. The Soviet leaders acknowledge that fear of nuclear war has affected their choice of means for furthering revolution. "Prevention of nuclear war has become a precondition for carrying out the world socialist revolution in a way that would not jeopardize civilization. . . ." ¹² They hold that the revolutionary process will proceed by its own momentum, assisted by prudent Soviet support, but that "provocative" support for revolution by the U.S.S.R. would risk thermonuclear war. Although remaining committed to world revolution, then, the Soviet leaders have ruled out the use of means that the Chinese Communists assert, with some reason, to be necessary.

As we have said, even short-term Soviet objectives, which are much more modest than world revolution, have been supported by disproportionate physical means for pursuing them. This disproportion lies at the heart of the Soviet strategy of deception. It could succeed only if limited pressure were sufficient to achieve the ends desired, that is, if the West did not wait for a decisive confrontation between the two sides, but hastened to make concessions as soon as the U.S.S.R. appeared to be in earnest in its demands.

The point beyond which Soviet pressure would elicit concessions from the West—what might be termed the "threshold of concession"—was for the Soviet leaders the critical unknown. Khrushchev alluded to this unknown—the West's capacity to resist Soviet pressure

¹⁰ Article by a leader of the Costa Rican Communist party, E. M. Valverde, in *Izvestiia*, June 19, 1964.

¹¹ Open letter of the Central Committee to Party Organizations, to All Communists of the Soviet Union, *Pravda*, July 14, 1963.

¹² B. N. Ponomarev, "Some Problems of the Revolutionary Movement," *World Marxist Review*, December, 1962, p. 9.

the acceptance of his proposals: "A peaceful settlement in Europe must be attained this year."⁸

Subsequently, on July 6, Khrushchev announced a decision to increase defense spending "in the current year" by almost one-third. Since such an increase could not be spent on a rational program within that year, a major purpose of the announcement must have been to demonstrate the seriousness of Soviet intentions in regard to Berlin. Later in the month, however, on July 26, President Kennedy countered Khrushchev by requesting from Congress a supplementary military appropriation of over \$3 billion. Thus the immediate effect of Khrushchev's renewed effort to exert pressure on the West was to accelerate the arms race, a consequence that the U.S.S.R. could ill afford.

In addition, the United States moved to strengthen its capacity to engage in military operations in Central Europe. Well over half the supplementary appropriation was intended to improve American conventional capabilities. Reserve and Air National Guard units were to be expanded, and draft calls and civil defense expenditures sharply increased. The scheduled retirement of B-47 bombers was postponed. Troops numbering forty-one thousand and matériel began to move to Germany. The display of resolution implicit in the strengthening of United States military capabilities in Europe must have made a painful impression on Khrushchev, particularly in view of his reduction of personnel in the Soviet armed forces during 1960 and the continuing Soviet incapacity to engage in general war.

In the midst of the renewal of the crisis over Berlin, and at a time of serious political deterioration in East Germany, the G.D.R. suddenly, on August 13, closed the sector border between East and West Berlin to prevent further defection of the East German population. The measure was of course authorized by the Soviet regime, presumably as a defensive maneuver that was unlikely to provoke a strong response. Once taken, the measure was almost welcomed by many in the West, since it seemed to resolve an acute problem for Soviet security in Central Europe and thereby to stabilize the situation.⁹

The wall dividing Berlin did not immediately bring the hoped-for

⁸ June 15, 1961. Khrushchev reaffirmed the deadline in a speech on June 21.

⁹ It has sometimes been suggested that the Soviet offensive against Berlin was largely a cover operation designed to make the West accept the wall. This explanation seems defective, however, since the political and economic costs to the U.S.S.R. of the Berlin offensive were great, whereas its contribution to the West's acceptance of the wall was probably not significant.

lessening of Soviet pressure on the West's position in Berlin. Its unopposed construction damaged confidence in the West's resolve and seriously damaged the morale of West Berlin's population. These effects may have encouraged Soviet hopes for important gains. But the United States continued to respond sharply to Soviet pressures, insofar as pressures could be distinguished from merely defensive measures. There was a sixteen-hour confrontation of United States and Soviet tanks at a Berlin checkpoint on October 27, an experience that was probably as sobering for Moscow as it was for Washington.

About this time, responsible United States leaders began to deny publicly the credibility of Soviet missile claims and to speak with new confidence of a large margin of American superiority in strategic forces. In their public assessments of the strategic balance, the Soviet leaders were now very much on the defensive. A moderation of Soviet claims to strategic superiority had become apparent as early as the end of 1960, when the Soviet leaders, in order to justify their failure to take the aggressive and risky actions demanded by Communist China, had begun to emphasize the mutual destructiveness of thermonuclear war instead of its dire consequences for the capitalist world. A year later, when the United States confidently asserted its strategic superiority, the Soviet leaders were quick to dispute the claim but cautious in asserting their own superiority. As a result, the effectiveness of Soviet threats against the West was seriously impaired.

Shortly before, in his speech to the Communist Party Congress on October 17, Khrushchev lifted the deadline he had placed on the signing of a peace treaty with Germany. "The question of a time limit for the signing of a German peace treaty will not be so important if the Western powers show a readiness to settle the German problem; we shall not in that case absolutely insist on signing the peace treaty before December 31, 1961."¹⁰ He still insisted, however, that such a peace treaty would be signed "with or without the Western powers" and would end their rights of occupation in Berlin. Subsequently, deprived of a deadline and of bold strategic threats, the Berlin campaign lost its momentum. Despite some renewed Soviet pressure on the Berlin air corridors,¹¹ the offensive had ground to a halt by mid-1962 in desultory and inconclusive negotiations.

¹⁰ *Pravda*, October 18, 1961.

¹¹ In February and March, 1962, Soviet planes began to buzz commercial airliners in the air corridors and to drop metal chaff that interfered with their radars.

SEARCH FOR A WAY OUT: FROM BERLIN TO CUBA

THE FIRST PHASE of the Berlin offensive ended in 1960, the second and last phase in 1962. Failure in both cases stemmed from the adverse strategic balance. The Soviet Union's effort to deceive the West regarding its ICBM capabilities had only a limited success. Probably more important, the constraints imposed upon the Soviet leaders by their own understanding of the strategic balance limited their willingness to apply the pressure needed to realize their objectives. The mere threat of measures to impair the West's position in Berlin proved inadequate. This was crucial, and it was something the U.S.S.R. could not know in advance. Nor did it become apparent at once. The U.S.S.R. could discover the West's will to resist only by testing it. During the course of the Berlin campaign and probably by the end of 1961, the Soviet leaders became sufficiently convinced of the quality of the West's will to resist.

Even if the Soviet Union had cut off traffic with Berlin, transferred control of access routes to the East Germans, or signed a peace treaty with East Germany, there was still no assurance that these measures would have led directly to their objective. And after 1958, it appeared more likely that these measures would be resisted and that any attempt at effective counteraction by the U.S.S.R. would further heighten the risk of war. Since war was wholly unacceptable, not even the first step on the road that might lead to it could be taken.

The Western powers were unwilling to make the concessions demanded by the U.S.S.R. merely in response to threats of forceful measures; at the same time, they could not discount possible Soviet readiness to accept the increased risk of war that these measures implied. Realizing this, Khrushchev, even after twice retreating from his commitments to act against Western interests if his demands were not met, retained the freedom to resume the offensive almost at will. By 1962, however, Western leaders were persuaded that the U.S.S.R. was unwilling to accept the risks involved in taking the necessary measures to end the occupation of Berlin. By then, Khrushchev's opponents no longer saw his failure to act as a pause before a new storm but as a retreat before their power and their firm resolution to use that power if necessary. Now many in the West were beginning to

regard the problem of Berlin less as a threat posed to allied interests than as a source of great discomfiture to Khrushchev and a threat to his position of leadership in the Communist bloc.

Since the adverse strategic balance had twice led to failure in the Soviet offensive against Berlin, it was clearly folly to attempt it a third time without first altering the strategic balance. Evidently some time in the first half of 1962, Khrushchev decided to seek some quick and dramatic means for achieving a breakthrough that would strengthen the U.S.S.R.'s position—militarily, diplomatically, and psychologically—on a whole range of outstanding issues and particularly on Berlin. His search led to the decision to deploy strategic missiles in Cuba.

The Cuban missile episode was a bold effort to alter the unfavorable strategic environment in which the U.S.S.R. found itself in 1962 as the result of the United States intercontinental arms buildup and the collapse of the "missile gap" myth.¹ Other hypotheses regarding Soviet objectives treat the Soviet missiles and bombers deployed in Cuba essentially as bargaining counters emplaced on the island only so that they could be withdrawn in exchange for desired local political or military concessions by the United States. Although, according to these hypotheses, broader consequences might have followed from Soviet success in extracting American concessions under these circumstances, the Cuban missile venture was not intended primarily to alter the over-all strategic balance; in particular, Berlin was not a major target of the Cuban deployment. Since the Cuban missile crisis plays such a central role in this study of Soviet efforts to manipulate and capitalize on world beliefs about the strategic balance, it is necessary to deal with these alternative hypotheses before presenting our own.

Some observers have imputed to the Soviet Union certain limited aims, which, they believe, Khrushchev in fact achieved. Among such aims was the securing of political concessions from the United States, such as a public pledge by the President not to invade Cuba. In the end, these observers argue, Khrushchev was able to make some general political gains. In some quarters, for example, he was given credit, which he claimed, for having saved the peace.

From our point of view, even if these objectives had been fully achieved, they would have been manifestly disproportionate to the

¹ See Arnold L. Horelick, "The Cuban Missile Crisis: An Analysis of Soviet Calculations and Behavior," in *World Politics*, April, 1964. The discussion of Cuba in this and the following chapter is largely taken from that article.

costs and risks incurred by the Soviet Union in undertaking to place missiles in Cuba. At least forty-two IL-28 bombers and an equal number of strategic missiles were brought into Cuba by Soviet ships. Nine missile sites were established, six with four launchers each for the MRBM's, and three fixed sites, to include four launching positions each, for the IRBM's.² Yet a token force of a few conspicuously deployed MRBM's would doubtless have sufficed to provoke a United States demand that the Soviet Union remove them from Cuba.

The magnitude and character of the Soviet strategic weapon deployment in Cuba also throws doubt on another hypothesis that has been advanced—namely, that the Soviet Union merely sought to compel the United States to withdraw its missiles from Turkey in exchange for the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba. Since the United States had only one squadron (fifteen missiles) of Jupiters deployed in Turkey,³ no more than one-third the number of MRBM's with a 1,100-mile range known to have been shipped to Cuba would have been necessary to make such a trade seem quantitatively plausible. The costly and essentially unsalvageable fixed sites that were being prepared to receive IRBM's with a 2,200-mile range were altogether superfluous to any intended Cuba-Turkey missile base exchange since the United States had no equivalent missiles in Turkey or anywhere else, for that matter.

Of course, a mutual withdrawal of missiles from Cuba and Turkey was explicitly proposed by Khrushchev in his October 27 letter to President Kennedy. But the mere fact that Khrushchev proposed such an exchange at one point during the crisis, after the United States had demanded the withdrawal of Soviet strategic weapons, does not prove that this was his objective from the start any more than his subsequent withdrawal of the missiles without such a *quid pro quo* proves that his ultimate objective was simply to get President Kennedy to promise not to invade Cuba. It is true that the withdrawal of United States strategic weapons from Turkey, under apparent Soviet duress, would have given Khrushchev a more tangible return for his trouble than a conditional verbal pledge by the United

² Briefing by John Hughes, of the Defense Intelligence Agency, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1964*, Hearings before a Subcommittee of the House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 1963, Part 1, p. 7 (hereinafter cited as *Hearings on Department of Defense Appropriations for 1964*).

³ *Missiles and Rockets*, January 7, 1963, p. 26.

States not to invade Cuba.⁴ It was one thing for the United States and an allied host country to decide jointly to substitute other means of defense for some bases, such as Polaris submarines in adjacent waters; it would have been quite another for the United States, under Soviet duress, to withdraw from its bases, regardless of the wishes of its allies.

It seems questionable, however, that the Soviets would accept the costs and risks of deploying missiles in Cuba merely to have them available to exchange for the withdrawal of United States missiles from Turkey. The phasing out of United States missiles deployed overseas, without a Soviet *quid pro quo*, was already known to have been under consideration long before the October 1962 crisis,⁵ though the Soviet leaders may not have been certain regarding American intentions. Moreover, for reasons of geography and because the United States already possessed a large advantage in intercontinental nuclear delivery capabilities, a strategic missile base in Cuba would have been a far more valuable military asset to the Soviet Union than a comparable base in Turkey was to the United States. Finally, as pointed out earlier, if the Soviet leaders intended no more than to lay the groundwork for an agreement on the mutual withdrawal of strategic missiles, they need not have deployed more than a token force of MRBM's and need not have constructed installations for IRBM's at all. It is more likely that the base-exchange proposal was an improvised, or perhaps even a prepared fallback, position to cover unfavorable contingencies than that it was the culmination of Soviet hopes for the Cuban venture.⁶

Khrushchev's official explanation of Soviet policy was that Soviet strategic weapons were deployed in Cuba solely to defend the island

⁴ Had the United States accepted the Soviet base-exchange proposal of October 27, Khrushchev would have received such a pledge in any case, since a reciprocal exchange of no-invasion pledges was part of the proposed bargain.

⁵ Secretary McNamara has testified that the long-standing program to replace the obsolete Thor and Jupiter missiles dated from early 1961 (*Hearings on Department of Defense Appropriations for 1964*, p. 57).

⁶ If the base-exchange proposal was a prepared fallback position, the Soviet leaders failed to prepare their propagandists for it. On the same day (October 28, 1962) that Khrushchev's letter to the President proposing an exchange of bases was made public on the front page of *Izvestiia*, a commentary on an inside page stated: "There are those in the U.S.A. who speculate that in exchange for denying Cuba the ability to repel American aggression, one might 'give up' some American base close to Soviet territory. . . . Such 'proposals,' if you can call them that, merely serve to betray the unclean conscience of the authors." The editor of *Izvestiia* was then Alexei Adzhubei, Khrushchev's son-in-law.

against attack by the United States and that once the threat of such an attack was removed (by the President's conditional undertaking not to launch one) the Soviet weapons, having served their purpose, were withdrawn and peace was preserved. But the credibility of this assertion was seriously impaired when Khrushchev, presumably to demonstrate that his decision to withdraw the missiles was not a needless concession, acknowledged that he took that decisive step only when urgent word reached him that an American attack on Cuba appeared imminent.

Far from paralyzing the "imperialists" by giving them, in Khrushchev's words, "a more realistic idea of the danger of thermonuclear war," the discovery of Soviet strategic missiles in Cuba provoked a United States naval quarantine, a rapid buildup of army and tactical air forces in the southeastern part of the country, and a world-wide alert of the Strategic Air Command. Thus it would seem that the deployment of Soviet strategic weapons in Cuba did not succeed, as Khrushchev said he had expected, "in bringing the aggressors to their senses." In his words:

In the morning of October 27 we received information from our Cuban comrades and from other sources which directly stated that this [U.S.] attack would be carried out within the next two or three days. We regarded the telegrams received as a signal of *utmost alarm*, and this alarm was justified. Immediate action was required in order to prevent an attack against Cuba and preserve peace.⁷

The action, of course, was Khrushchev's proposal to the President to withdraw from Cuba all the weapons "which you regard as offensive" in exchange for cessation of the quarantine and a pledge by the President not to invade Cuba. It must have appeared to Khrushchev, then, that the United States had been prepared to attack Cuba, not only despite the presence of Soviet weapons, but precisely because of it, since evidently only by agreeing to withdraw the weapons did Khrushchev believe he could secure from the President assurances that the United States would not attack.

The strange logic of Khrushchev's face-saving explanation of Soviet motives and behavior does not in itself disprove his contention that Soviet missiles were deployed in Cuba solely to deter an attack by

the United States; if deterrence of an attack on Cuba was the sole Soviet objective, however, the plan backfired: the Soviet weapons provoked rather than deterred strong American action.

Khrushchev's account of Soviet objectives is vulnerable on another ground—the appropriateness of the weapons deployed in Cuba for the ostensible purpose of deterring an American attack on that country. Surely, a threat to destroy several southeastern cities of the United States, or Miami alone, *if credible*, would have been adequate to deter such an attack. For this, tactical missiles with a range of several hundred miles would have sufficed. It could have been claimed that such weapons were designed to strike at airfields and marshaling and embarkation points in the Florida area from which a United States invasion might be mounted. Perhaps by employing a high-lofting technique, the MRBM's that were deployed and the IRBM's that were being prepared could have been used to strike close-in targets, but such long-range missiles are not designed for that purpose. Whatever the deployment of missiles with ranges in excess of several hundred miles may have added to deterrence of an attack was more than outweighed by the additional provocation they offered.

Had the Soviet missiles remained in Cuba, declarations regarding the control arrangements established for them would have been important indicators of the Soviet Union's objectives. To maximize the effectiveness of Soviet missiles deployed in Cuba as a deterrent against an American attack on Cuba and to reduce the risk that their employment, in the event of an attack, would bring down United States nuclear retaliation upon the U.S.S.R., it might have been desirable for Khrushchev to have the American government believe that the Soviet missiles were at Castro's disposal and under his control. In the United States Castro had gained a reputation for impulsive, irresponsible behavior. Whether authentic or not, the post-crisis remarks attributed to Ernesto Guevara, that the Cubans were prepared, in the event of an American attack, to strike "the very heart of the United States, including New York,"⁸ conformed to the image of the Cuban leadership that was widely held in the United States. Once an operational missile capability was established in Cuba, such beliefs on the part of Americans might have lent substantial deterrent value to the missiles deployed there.

⁷ *Pravda*, December 13, 1962 (italics added). The "other sources" presumably included "Mr. X," the head of Soviet intelligence in the United States, who acted as Khrushchev's private and unofficial agent for communicating (through John Scali, ABC correspondent) with high United States officials during the crisis (Roger Hilsman, "The Cuban Crisis: How Close We Were to War," *Look*, August 25, 1964, pp. 17-21).

⁸ According to Theodore Draper, these remarks were reportedly made by Guevara in an interview with a London *Daily Worker* correspondent but did not appear in the version published on December 4, 1962 ("Castro and Communism," *Reporter*, January 17, 1963, p. 44).

On the other hand, to bring Cuba-based missiles to bear in support of Soviet interests in confrontations with the United States (for example, in Berlin), the Americans would have to believe that the missiles were at the disposal of the Soviet leaders. Until such time as the Soviet Union might wish to bring the missiles to bear for this purpose, however, its leaders would probably prefer to keep the question of control in an ambiguous state.

Thus, it seems obvious that a premature explicit announcement on control would have obliged Khrushchev to accept certain political liabilities. Whether he proclaimed Soviet or Cuban control over the missiles, Khrushchev would have had to acknowledge that the Soviet Union was engaging in a military practice that he had repeatedly denounced. A claim to Soviet control implied a strategic Soviet base on foreign territory; an announcement of Cuban control implied proliferation of nuclear strategic weapons.

On October 22, 1962, President Kennedy impaled Khrushchev on one of the horns of this dilemma by unilaterally resolving the ambiguity: "It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union."⁹ Initially, the Soviet Union attempted to evade the issue by refusing to acknowledge that it had emplaced strategic weapons in Cuba, though it affirmed in its first official statement on the crisis (October 23) that Cuba alone had the right to decide what kinds of weapons were appropriate for the defense of Cuba.¹⁰ The Soviet denial that the military equipment provided to Cuba included strategic weapons reflected concern that the United States government might feel impelled to strike quickly to prevent operational missiles from falling into Castro's hands. Moscow therefore offered the following oblique reassurance: "Nuclear weapons, which have been created by the Soviet people and which are in the hands of the people, will never be used for the purpose of aggression."¹¹

On the same day, Khrushchev made this reassurance explicit during

a three-hour private conversation in Moscow with the vice-president of Westinghouse Electric, William E. Knox, through whom he presumably wished to communicate informally with the United States government. According to Knox, Khrushchev acknowledged that Soviet ballistic missiles had been furnished to Cuba but insisted they were completely controlled by Soviet officers. ". . . The Cubans were very volatile people, Mr. Khrushchev said, and all of the sophisticated hardware furnished for their defense was entirely under the control of Soviet officers; it would be used only in the event that Cuba was attacked, and it would never be fired except on his orders as Commander in Chief of all of the Soviet Union."¹²

Finally, in his October 27 letter to President Kennedy, the first Khrushchev letter published during the crisis, the Soviet Premier informed the President that "the weapons in Cuba that you have mentioned and which you say alarm you are in the hands of Soviet officers. . . . Therefore, any accidental use of them whatsoever to the detriment of the United States is excluded."¹³

Despite the advantages to be gained from ambiguity regarding control of the missiles in Cuba, Khrushchev evidently felt compelled to reassure the President explicitly that Castro could not order the missiles to be fired and that there was therefore no need for the United States to make an immediate attack before the missiles became operational in order to forestall a possible irrational act by the "volatile" Cubans.¹⁴ Whatever value the Soviet weapons may have been intended to have as a deterrent of a local United States attack on Cuba was seriously diminished by this reassurance.

It is questionable, however, whether deterrence of a local United States attack on Cuba was ever regarded by the Soviet leaders as more than a subsidiary and derivative effect of a venture intended primarily to serve other ends. Certainly, the size and character of the intended deployment indicate that it was meant to achieve some broader purpose. As we have said, the American cities within the range of the MRBM's (including the capital) would have been a sufficient hostage to deter an attack on Cuba by the United States. The

⁹ *New York Times*, October 23, 1962. The phrase "full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union" may have implied to the Soviet leaders not only that the United States would not treat the Soviet Union as a sanctuary area if the Cuba-based missiles were fired but that it did not intend to restrict itself to a limited strategic response ("tit for tat" retaliation).

¹⁰ *Pravda*, October 24, 1962.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *New York Times*, November 18, 1962.

¹³ *Pravda*, October 28, 1962. The implication is that, if the weapons had been under Cuban control, the possibility that they might be "accidentally used" could not be excluded.

¹⁴ This did not occur for all MRBM systems until October 28; the IRBM's never achieved operational status, nor, apparently, did the IL-28 bombers (*Hearings on Department of Defense Appropriations for 1964*, pp. 12, 16).

introduction of IRBM's can therefore most reasonably be explained as providing a capability against strategic-bomber and missile-base targets, which could not be reached by the MRBM's.

Some circumstantial evidence from the Cuban side tends to support this interpretation. Castro has been quoted by a friendly source, the correspondent for *Le Monde*, Claude Julien, as having said that the Cuban leaders had considered among themselves the possibility of requesting that the U.S.S.R. furnish Cuba with missiles, but had not come to any decision when Moscow proposed to emplace them:

They explained to us that in accepting them we would be reinforcing the socialist camp the world over, and because we had received important aid from the socialist camp we estimated that we could not decline. That is why we accepted them. It was not in order to assure our own defense, but first of all to reinforce socialism on the international scale. Such is the truth even if other explanations are furnished elsewhere.¹⁵

Subsequently, Castro gave conflicting accounts of the origin of the proposal to emplace strategic missiles in Cuba, but the above account has the ring of truth.¹⁶ Moreover, in March, 1965, after the ouster of Khrushchev, he reverted to the original position he had taken in the Julien interview:

We speak in the name of the people who, for the sake of strengthening the revolutionary movement, for the sake of strengthening the socialist camp . . . without hesitation accepted the risk of thermonuclear war, the

¹⁵ *Le Monde*, March 22, 1963.

¹⁶ *Prensa Latina* (Havana), March 22, 1963. Castro questioned published reports of the interview, denying, for example, that "I expressed myself in an unfriendly way at any time about Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev." Castro's general refutation pointedly referred only to the UPI version of *Le Monde's* article: "I do not believe that Julien, whom we consider a friend of Cuba, can be guilty of untruths like some of the statements the UPI attributes to him" (italics added). The March 22 TASS version of Castro's denial omitted both of the statements quoted above.

Castro was subsequently questioned by two other journalists regarding the origin of the plan to deploy Soviet missiles in Cuba. According to Herbert L. Matthews (*Return to Cuba* ["Hispanic American Report Series"; Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University, 1964], p. 16), Castro stated flatly on October 23, 1963, that "the idea of installing the nuclear weapons was his, not the Russians'." However, three weeks later, according to Jean Daniel's account of his interview with the Cuban Premier, Castro appeared to confirm the account given earlier in the Julien interview: "We thought of a proclamation, an alliance, conventional military aid. . . . They [the Russians] reasoned that if conventional military assistance was the extent of their assistance, the United States might not hesitate to instigate an invasion, in which case Russia would retaliate and this would inevitably touch off a world war. . . . Under these circumstances, how could we Cubans refuse to share the risks taken to save us?" (Jean Daniel, "Unofficial Envoy: An Historic Report from Two Capitals," *New Republic*, December 14, 1963, pp. 18-19). Matthews writes that he telephoned Castro after Daniel's account was published and was again told: "We were the ones who put forward the idea of the missiles" (Matthews, *loc. cit.*).

risk of a nuclear attack upon us, when, exercising our full right, which we did not decline, and in complete accord with law, we agreed to the emplacement of strategic nuclear rockets in our country . . . and we never had any regrets (*applause*). We not only agreed to the emplacement of these rockets but we also did not agree to their removal (*applause*). And I think this is no secret to anyone.¹⁷

Of course, the deployment of Soviet missiles in Cuba, to the extent that it strengthened the Soviet position in its "world-wide" confrontation with the United States, would also have added credibility to Soviet strategic threats, including the threat to defend Cuba against United States attack. In fact, the implication of the official Soviet rationale for deploying strategic weapons in Cuba—namely, that the threat posed to the United States by Soviet weapons *based in the U.S.S.R.* lacked sufficient credibility to deter an American attack on "socialist" Cuba—later embarrassed Khrushchev when he was obliged to defend his erratic behavior in the missile crisis.¹⁸

Before the crisis, Khrushchev's expressions of strategic support for Cuba were framed in notably cautious and equivocal terms: the U.S.S.R.'s capability to defend Cuba with Soviet-based missiles was affirmed, but a commitment to do so was carefully avoided.¹⁹ Cuban leaders, however, consistently interpreted Khrushchev's words as if they represented a firm, though tacit, commitment. For example, as far back as January, 1961, according to Guevara, it was "well known that the Soviet Union and all the socialist states *are ready to go to war* to defend our sovereignty and that *a tacit agreement* has been reached between our peoples."²⁰

¹⁷ *Pravda*, March 18, 1965.

¹⁸ Khrushchev handled this question gingerly in defending his Cuban policy against Chinese and Albanian criticism in his speech at the Congress of the East German Communist Party in Berlin on January 16, 1963: "One may object that, under the influence of the most unrestrained incitement, the U.S. imperialists will not keep their promise and will again turn their arms against Cuba. But the forces which protected Cuba now exist and are *growing in strength every day*. It does not matter where the rockets are located, in Cuba, or elsewhere. They can be used with equal success against any particular aggression" (*Pravda*, January 17, 1963; italics added). The implicit question is: If so, why were Soviet missiles deployed in Cuba in the first place? And the implicit answer: Soviet-based strategic power was not then great enough to deter a United States attack, but it was "growing in strength every day" and soon would be (or would appear to be).

¹⁹ In July, 1960, Khrushchev said that "figuratively speaking, in case of need, Soviet artillerymen can support the Cuban people with their rocket fire . . ." (*Pravda*, July 9, 1960). The conditional form of this threat ("can," not "will," support was retained in the Soviet government's statement on Cuba on September 11, 1962, which asserted that the U.S.S.R. "has the capability from its own territory to render assistance to any peace-loving state" (*Pravda*, September 11, 1962).

²⁰ *Obra revolucionaria*, January 25, 1961, quoted by Draper, *op. cit.*, p. 39 (italics added).

It may be assumed that the Cuban leaders had pressed Khrushchev for an explicit and unequivocal commitment to defend Cuba with Soviet-based weapons in the event of an attack by the United States. It was presumably to secure such a commitment, which the Soviet Union was evidently reluctant to give, that Castro in effect volunteered Cuba for membership in the "socialist camp" in 1961. Given a choice between an explicit and unequivocal Soviet guarantee, on the one hand, and the stationing of Soviet strategic weapons on Cuban soil, on the other, Castro might well have preferred the former, under certain circumstances. To the extent that Castro (1) could have had confidence that the Soviet Union would honor such a commitment, or (2) believed that it would be credited to some serious extent in the United States, or (3) believed that a United States attack was unlikely in any case, he might not have thought it necessary to request the Soviet Union to establish strategic missile bases in Cuba and might have been wary of the political consequences of such a move throughout Latin America and in the United States.

The reasons for not requesting Soviet missiles in Cuba did not prevent Castro from accepting the missiles when the Soviet Union proposed to deploy them there. Castro probably believed the likelihood of an American attack was not negligible. He may have agreed to the Soviet proposal not only because of his general dependence on the Soviet Union, but also because the apparent desperation of the Soviet leaders to reinforce their world-wide position vis-à-vis the United States had led him to regard the already equivocal Soviet pledges to defend Cuba with Soviet-based weapons as seriously compromised.²¹ In brief, he may have felt compelled to accept Soviet missiles under Soviet control as the only means available to deter a United States attack on Cuba.

How could the emplacement of strategic weapons in Cuba reinforce the world-wide position of the Soviet Union? The deployment of strategic weapons in Cuba may have recommended itself to the Soviet leaders as a "quick fix" measure to achieve a substantial improvement in Soviet strike capabilities against the United States. A large increase in the programmed Soviet-based ICBM forces or

²¹ In the immediate aftermath of the crisis, the positions prior to the crisis of the Soviet Union and Cuba on the firmness of Soviet pledges to defend Cuba were sharply reversed. Whereas the Soviet leaders, presumably to placate Castro, offered increasingly strong pledges to defend Cuba, Cuban leaders ignored them and vowed to resist any United States attack with their own resources. Later, however, as Soviet-Cuban relations recovered from the estrangement of the fall of 1962, Cuban leaders began to welcome Soviet pledges with great public enthusiasm.

missile-launching nuclear submarines would have provided the Soviet leaders with a military capability far more effective for second-strike purposes than the emplacement of highly vulnerable MRBM's, IRBM's, and light bombers in Cuba; but such an expansion of intercontinental delivery means could be achieved only gradually and at far greater cost. The Cuban deployment may have been undertaken not as a substitute for such a buildup but as a stopgap measure pending its completion.

Certainly, the deployment of limited numbers of MRBM's and IRBM's in Cuba would not have solved the Soviet Union's strategic problem. The evident deficiencies of such a force have led some observers to conclude that military considerations were of little importance in the Soviet decision. It is true that the missile sites were soft, very close to the United States, and after detection, under close and constant surveillance. Presumably, they would have been highly vulnerable to a United States first strike, even with conventional bombs. As a Soviet first-strike force, the missiles, deployed or being readied in Cuba in October, 1962, were in themselves too small a force to destroy the United States strategic nuclear strike force. Even together with the larger long-range strategic force based in the U.S.S.R., they would have been inadequate for this purpose in the fall of 1962. Moreover, there would have been a problem, though perhaps not an insurmountable one, of co-ordinating salvos from close-in and distant bases so as to avoid a ragged attack.

On the other hand, the installation of Soviet strategic missiles in Cuba would have complicated a United States first strike; and it would have substantially improved Soviet capabilities to launch a pre-emptive attack. It will be recalled that Defense Minister Malinovsky had stated at the Twenty-second Congress of the CPSU in October, 1961, and several times thereafter that "the most important, the main, and the first-priority task" of the Soviet armed forces was to be prepared to deal a "timely blow" in order to "frustrate the aggressive designs" of a would-be attacker.²² Politically, an improved Soviet capability to pre-empt might have reduced the credibility of American threats to respond with strategic weapons to local Soviet aggression, even in Europe. As to the first-strike potential of Cuba-based Soviet missiles, they could have brought a substantial portion of United States nuclear striking power under attack, essentially without warning. Moreover, there is no assurance that the buildup would have

²² See p. 93.

stopped with the sites already completed or under construction when the Soviets were compelled to abandon the operation.

Whatever their strategic shortcomings, the additional capabilities provided the Soviet leaders by Cuba-based missiles were not insignificant. It is difficult to conceive of any other measure that promised to produce so large an improvement in the Soviet strategic position as quickly or as cheaply. That the Cuban missile deployment would not in itself have provided the Soviet Union with a retaliation-proof first-strike capability against the United States is hardly a reason for dismissing it as of limited strategic importance, as some observers have attempted to do. As the President subsequently said, the Soviet leaders tried materially to change the balance of power. Certainly, the deployment of Soviet missiles in Cuba, in his words, "would have *politically* changed the balance of power; it would have appeared to [change it] and appearances contribute to reality."²³ The world-wide position of the Soviet Union that needed to be reinforced in the fall of 1962 was not only its strategic position vis-à-vis the United States but also its bargaining position on a range of political issues whose outcomes would be importantly affected by the strategic imbalance in favor of the United States.

It had become evident at least as early as the second half of 1961 that the forward momentum of the Soviet Union in international affairs had largely exhausted itself without yielding the gains that the Soviet leaders had expected and the West had feared since the mid-1950's. The West's fears had been fed by mounting evidence of the growing military, scientific, technological, and economic power of the Soviet Union. Some of this evidence was real enough, but much of it, particularly in the realm of strategic power, was illusory. Yet this very realm was central in the conduct of the cold war. The effects of the striking Soviet achievements in space exploration were amplified, sometimes out of all proportion to their intrinsic political and military worth, by their presumed bearing on the strategic balance. With the discovery in 1961 that the missile gap had all along favored the West rather than the Soviet Union, there was a perceptible change in the world political climate. Western self-confidence was restored, and Soviet anxieties were evidently intensified.

Moreover, confident Soviet expectations of dividends from military and economic aid to the underdeveloped countries had failed to materialize. Western European prosperity had reached a new peak,

²³ *Washington Post*, December 18, 1962 (italics added).

and despite De Gaulle's intransigence the prospects for growing European economic and political unity must have looked distressingly good to Moscow. At the same time, the unity of the Communist camp was being shattered by the escalating conflict between its two most powerful members. Indeed, the Chinese Communist attack on Khrushchev centered precisely on the unfavorable trend in the cold war, which the Chinese attributed to Khrushchev's faulty and erratic leadership.

Finally, there was the long-smoldering, still unresolved problem of Berlin. That the Cuban missile deployment and Khrushchev's Berlin strategy were linked in some way was borne out to some extent by the Soviet government's statement of September 11, 1962, in which the U.S.S.R. acknowledged that it was providing military assistance—though of a strictly defensive type—to Cuba, warned that a United States attack on Cuba might unleash a thermonuclear war, but at the same time declared a moratorium on new moves in Berlin until after the United States congressional elections.²⁴ Khrushchev may have hoped to discourage any new American action against Cuba until after the elections (that is, until after the MRBM's, at least, became operational) by offering in return to desist from fomenting a new crisis in Berlin. After establishing a strategic base in Cuba, he may have hoped to use this new leverage to press for a favorable settlement in Berlin.

Success in the Cuban venture would have contributed greatly to a future political offensive against Berlin. The presence of a large operational missile force in Cuba was sure to become known, thus satisfying the need to demonstrate a strategic capability against the United States that would not, by the very act of disclosure, be deprived of military significance. Popular opinion in the United States would be considerably more impressed, and perhaps in some measure intimidated, by an acknowledged missile capability against American cities based in Cuba than by the previous hypothetical capability based thousands of miles away in the U.S.S.R. If Soviet deployment of missiles in Cuba was preliminary to a renewed offensive against Berlin, by frustrating the first, the United States prevented the second.

The link between Berlin and Cuba is clearly direct and undeniable; yet there are crucial differences between the two crises. The Berlin offensive inevitably hinged on a confrontation with the Western

²⁴ *Pravda*, September 11, 1962.

powers; the Cuban offensive required that every effort be made to avoid a confrontation with the United States. The objective in the Berlin offensive was to inflict a crushing defeat on the West, a defeat that could be decisive in the cold war; the objective of the Cuban offensive, although also far-reaching, was largely to set the stage for future engagements. Finally, the success of the Berlin offensive depended on making false strategic claims that would be credible to the West; the Cuban offensive was based on actual capabilities and was designed to change the strategic balance in reality. Such Soviet deception as was practiced in the Cuban offensive took the opposite form than previously—a denial that the U.S.S.R. was in the act of acquiring a new strategic capability.

The true relation of the Berlin problem to the Cuban crisis was obscured for many at the time of the crisis and afterward. There were widespread fears as the confrontation over the Soviet missiles in Cuba developed that the U.S.S.R. might counter United States pressure for their removal by renewed pressure to force the Western powers out of Berlin. American strategic superiority, however, made it too risky for the Soviet Union to use or even threaten to use Berlin as a trump card. The Soviet leaders apparently feared that a threatening Soviet move against that city, particularly in the midst of a crisis in the Caribbean, would be dangerously provocative. Emphasizing that the Cuban crisis "had brought the world one step, perhaps only half a step, from an abyss," Foreign Minister Gromyko told the Supreme Soviet in December, 1962: "This [Cuban] crisis . . . made many people think how the whole matter might have developed if yet another crisis in Central Europe had been added to the critical events around Cuba."²⁵ Indeed, Soviet quiescence in Berlin during and immediately after the Cuban missile crisis demonstrated the severe limitations of even overwhelming local military superiority in the hands of a strategically inferior power when the issue at stake is of central, not peripheral, importance to the opponent.²⁶

²⁵ *Pravda*, December 14, 1962.

²⁶ For an illuminating discussion of this point and its relevance for decisions regarding the extent to which NATO should rely on conventional weapons for the tactical defense of Europe, see Bernard Brodie, "What Price Conventional Capabilities in Europe?" *Reporter*, May 23, 1963, pp. 25–33.

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS AND ITS AFTERMATH

THE SOVIET EFFORT to deploy strategic missiles in Cuba was an application of the strategy of bluff and deception under new conditions, not an abandonment of that strategy. As already noted, it was designed to compensate for the increasing failure of the missile deception in which the U.S.S.R. had been engaged since 1957. Now in 1962, along with the hypothetical and concealed ICBM capability in the U.S.S.R., a visible IRBM and MRBM capability was to be created in Cuba. As in previous political offensives, the Soviet leaders sought to make large gains but were prepared to forego them whenever persistence seemed to increase the danger of war significantly.

Soviet calculations throughout the Cuban missile crisis can be reconstructed with some degree of confidence, because the confrontation with the United States was so open. For this reason, and because the crisis over Cuba, together with that over Berlin, provided a major test of these calculations, it will be useful to examine them in considerable detail and to show how they stood the test of battle in a political encounter almost without parallel in history.

It may seem to some that the risk assumed by the U.S.S.R. in attempting to deploy missiles in Cuba is incompatible with our contention that the Soviet leaders were unwilling to take actions that significantly increased the risk of nuclear war. Certainly, this contention would be hard to support if Khrushchev had consciously and deliberately accepted the possibility that his action in Cuba might directly provoke a thermonuclear attack on the Soviet Union. But although the Soviet leaders evidently accepted unusually high military and political risks in embarking on the Cuban venture, they almost certainly did not believe that an immediate United States thermonuclear response against the Soviet Union was one of them. In view of the adverse strategic balance, which the rockets in Cuba were to help rectify, the Soviet leaders would hardly have undertaken their venture unless they had been virtually certain that the United States would not respond by attacking the U.S.S.R. Whatever errors they made in anticipating the character and intensity of the response of the United States, they were doubtless correct in excluding nuclear attack. A very

crucial upper limit on the risks they did accept was thus established. No doubt, as the crisis unfolded, the Soviet leaders became concerned that a real danger of nuclear war might arise. In fact, the sudden withdrawal of their missiles apparently resulted from a decision to end the crisis quickly before it became necessary to face a serious risk of nuclear war in order to avoid even greater losses. Nevertheless, the Soviet leaders did run greater risks in the Cuban venture than in Berlin.

In Berlin, the Soviet leaders were unwilling to press ahead because the United States was insufficiently intimidated. In Cuba, they hoped to acquire additional means of intimidation and thereby lessen the likelihood of a dangerous United States response to measures the U.S.S.R. might take against Berlin. Although the risks involved in the Cuban venture were greater than those previously assumed, they were substantially smaller than the risks of directly implementing the measures that had been threatened against Berlin from 1958 to 1962. That is to say, the risks of the Cuban venture were intermediate between those assumed by the U.S.S.R. in its cautious offensive against Berlin from 1958 to 1962 and those it would have assumed had it acted boldly against Berlin thereafter. If the Cuban venture had succeeded, the risk of taking action against Berlin would have been lessened, although such action would probably still have exceeded the risk of deploying missiles in Cuba.

Confidence that it would not directly provoke nuclear war was a prerequisite for the Cuban missile venture, but it could not be a sufficient condition for success. Aside from their belief that the United States would not respond by striking the Soviet Union, what were the calculations that led the Soviet leaders to believe their venture could succeed? Undoubtedly, their understanding of the Cuban policy of the United States was a major factor in their decision. The ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion of April, 1961, demonstrated American hostility toward Castro, but it may also have convinced Soviet leaders that American reluctance to engage its own forces directly in military action against Cuba was so great that even the emplacement of Soviet strategic weapons on the island would be opposed by means that fell short of the use of armed force.¹ The

¹ At the same time, the fact that the United States had attempted, even though ineffectually, to overthrow Castro by using Cuban exile proxies both increased Castro's desire for Soviet military assistance and made such assistance seem legitimate to many third countries.

United States government's apparent acceptance of increasingly open Soviet involvement in Cuban affairs after the Bay of Pigs incident, including the shipment of arms and military technicians, may have further encouraged a belief among the Soviet leaders that the United States would intervene militarily only in response to the actual use of Cuba-based weapons against a state in the Western Hemisphere.

The Soviet arms buildup in Cuba was conducted in phases: first, basic conventional weapons, second, sophisticated weapon systems of a tactical type, and finally, advanced SA-2 surface-to-air missiles, which had been at least partially deployed before strategic missiles were introduced into the island in September, 1962. The American reaction to the arrival of each new type of weapon doubtless was observed closely in Moscow. The problem of interpretation became increasingly difficult, however, because as the character of the weapons shipped to Cuba grew more complex their delivery and deployment became increasingly covert. There was probably uncertainty as to whether the United States government was tacitly accepting the presence of new Soviet weapons or had not yet learned of their arrival. If there was uncertainty, the Soviet leaders evidently resolved it by assuming American forbearance.

By the spring of 1962 the Soviet Union had supplied the Cuban army with what Secretary McNamara has described as "great quantities" of conventional weapons and supplies, from pistols and rifles to heavy artillery and medium tanks. In addition, MIG-15, -17, and -19 aircraft and helicopters had been provided to the Cuban air force, and motor torpedo boats and coastal patrol vessels of the Kronstadt class had been delivered to the Cuban navy.² Arrival of these weapons was known to the United States government and was a matter of public record. The President and other administration spokesmen spoke of these weapons as "defensive" and indicated that they posed no threat to the security of the United States or of other Western Hemisphere countries.

In late July and early August, an unusual number of Soviet ships brought cargo and passengers to Cuban ports. There were reports that Soviet personnel who accompanied the equipment had unloaded it and that Cubans had been denied access to the dock area. By mid-

² *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1964*, Hearings before a Subcommittee of the House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 1963, Part I, p. 2 (hereinafter cited as *Hearings on Department of Defense Appropriations for 1964*).

August, Secretary McNamara has testified, analysis of these reports strongly suggested the possibility that the Soviet Union was introducing surface-to-air missile systems in Cuba. A high altitude reconnaissance mission flown on August 29 positively identified two SA-2 surface-to-air missile sites and tentatively identified six others. Later a short-range, coastal-defense, cruise-missile installation was also identified.³ Interpretation of these photographs was not yet available when the President, at his August 29 press conference, dealt with Senator Capehart's call for a United States invasion of Cuba. The President stated that he opposed an invasion of Cuba "at this time" and that it could "lead to very serious consequences for many people." He went on to say there was as yet no evidence of surface-to-air missiles or Soviet troops in Cuba, although Soviet military technicians might be there.⁴

On September 3, Moscow and Havana released the text of a joint communiqué signed in Moscow at the conclusion of the visit of Ernesto Guevara and Emilio Aragones. In it the U.S.S.R. acknowledged that, at the request of the Cuban government, it was sending "armaments" and technical specialists to train Cuban servicemen.⁵

On the following day, the White House issued a special presidential statement on Cuba: Information reaching the government in the previous four days had established the presence in Cuba of a number of anti-aircraft defensive missiles with a slant range of twenty-five miles, several Soviet-made motor torpedo boats equipped with fifteen-mile-range guided missiles, and approximately thirty-five hundred Soviet military technicians, some still en route. As the President stated, however, there was no evidence of any organized combat force in Cuba from any Soviet bloc country; of military bases provided to the U.S.S.R.; "of the presence of offensive ground-to-ground missiles; or of other significant offensive capability either in Cuban hands or under Soviet direction and guidance." The President warned: "Were it to be otherwise, the gravest issues would arise."⁶

On September 7, the President requested from Congress power to call up one hundred fifty thousand reservists without having to declare a national emergency, in order "to permit prompt and effective responses, as necessary, to challenges which may be pre-

³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴ *New York Times*, August 30, 1962.

⁵ *Pravda*, September 3, 1962.

⁶ *New York Times*, September 5, 1962.

sented in any part of the free world."⁷ Four days later, ostensibly in response to this presidential request, the Soviet government authorized TASS to issue a statement on Soviet-Cuban policy in which the United States was warned that an attack on Cuba would be "the start of the unleashing of war." Since the statement alluded to "reactionary" pressure in the United States for "an attack on Soviet ships carrying necessary goods and foodstuffs to the Cuban people," it may have been intended to deter American interference with this shipping. Strategic missiles and their associated equipment were probably still in transit on the high seas on September 11, since it is now estimated that this equipment first began arriving in Cuba about September 8.⁸ The Soviet government acknowledged that armaments and military equipment were among the goods being shipped to Cuba by the U.S.S.R. and asserted that this was "a purely internal affair of the states sending these cargoes and those which buy and receive them." But the statement went on to offer an ambiguous assurance:

The arms and military equipment sent to Cuba are intended solely for defensive purposes. The President of the U.S.A. and the American military, like the military of any country, know what means of defense are. How can these menace the United States of America?⁹

This assurance was amplified in a manner clearly meant to suggest that the Soviet Union did not intend to deploy strategic nuclear weapons on Cuban soil:

The Government of the Soviet Union has also authorized TASS to state that there is no need for the Soviet Union to set up in any other country—Cuba, for instance—the weapons it has for repelling aggression, for a retaliatory blow. The explosive power of our nuclear weapons is so great and the Soviet Union has such powerful missiles for delivering these nuclear warheads that there is no need to seek sites for them somewhere beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union. We have said and we repeat that if war is unleashed, if the aggressor attacks one or another state and this state asks for help, the Soviet Union has the capability to extend help from its own territory to any peace-loving state, and not only to Cuba.

At his September 13 press conference the President repeated that the Soviet shipments to Cuba did not constitute a serious threat to

⁷ *New York Times*, September 8, 1962. There was no reference to Cuba or to any other trouble spot in the presidential message accompanying the proposed measures. The reference to "challenges . . . in any part of the free world" might have been taken to suggest West Berlin rather than Cuba.

⁸ *Hearings on Department of Defense Appropriations for 1964*, p. 3.

⁹ *Izvestiia*, September 12, 1962.

any part of the Western Hemisphere and that unilateral United States military intervention could not "currently either be required or justified."¹⁰ But he also reiterated his previous warning that "if the Communist build-up in Cuba were to endanger or interfere with our security in any way," or "if Cuba should become an offensive military base of significant capacity for the Soviet Union, then this country will do whatever must be done to protect its own security and that of its allies." Further, the President now specifically stated that United States action would not have to await an overt act but would occur "if Cuba should possess a capacity to carry out offensive actions against the United States."

In his statements of September 4 and 13, then, the President had drawn a clear line between weapons of the type that had already been announced as present in Cuba, which the United States was presumably willing to tolerate, and weapons with an offensive capacity, specifically ground-to-ground missiles, whose presence in Cuba he declared was unacceptable to the United States government. Whatever the Soviet leaders may have thought of the general statements previously made by American leaders about "offensive" and "defensive" weapons in Cuba, the President's early and middle September statements left them no margin of doubt, for he explicitly placed ground-to-ground missiles in the "offensive," and hence unacceptable, category.

The President's first explicit statement on ground-to-ground missiles appeared several days before the earliest estimated date—around September 8—that the first Soviet missiles and associated equipment, clandestinely transported in the holds of large-hatch Soviet ships, could have reached Cuban ports.¹¹ His second statement, which warned that the mere presence of such weapons, even without any overt act, would require the United States government to act, was made before the earliest estimated date—between September 15 and 20—for the initiation of site construction and deployment activity.¹² Thus, shortly before the plan to emplace strategic missiles in Cuba entered its final and decisive phases, the Soviet leaders had two opportunities to reconsider their action in the light of the commitment of the United States to oppose it. The President's warnings may have raised anxiety in Moscow, but they clearly did not deter the Soviet leaders.

¹⁰ *New York Times*, September 14, 1962.

¹¹ *Hearings on Department of Defense Appropriations for 1964*, p. 25.

Although the Soviet leaders no doubt regarded the President's statements as a commitment by the United States government to oppose the emplacement of Soviet strategic weapons in Cuba, they may have believed that, at least initially, the United States would restrict itself to diplomatic means. They may further have relied on their ability to make the missiles operational quickly enough to ensure the venture's success. The deployment was carried out with a rapidity that the United States intelligence community found "remarkable."¹³ Had the Soviets succeeded in attaining an operational capability clandestinely and then confronting the United States with a *fait accompli*, as they evidently meant to do, we may wonder what the outcome might have been.¹⁴ Speaking of the week-long deliberations that preceded the President's crucial decision in October, Theodore C. Sorensen, special counsel to the President, has said that the pressure of time was felt keenly:

For all of us knew that, once the missile sites under construction became operational and capable of responding to any apparent threat with a nuclear volley, the President's options would be drastically changed.¹⁵

The Soviet leaders may not have relied entirely on avoiding detection until they had completed the missile deployment. Given their difficulties in maintaining complete secrecy and their apparent willingness to do without feasible measures of concealment in order to achieve greater speed, they could hardly have excluded the possibility that some evidence of the deployment would be available to the United States government before it was completed. Allegations that Soviet strategic missiles were present in Cuba, sometimes attributed to Cuban refugees, sometimes even to unnamed members of the intelligence community, had been publicized in the United States even before the first shipment of these weapons is believed to have arrived in Cuba. As it turned out, the airing of these charges may have assisted the Soviet operation, since the administration felt obliged to deny the allegations publicly and to insist repeatedly that the Soviet

¹³ *Hearings on Department of Defense Appropriations for 1964*, p. 6.

¹⁴ Actually, if the United States would have adopted the same policy for dealing with the situation, the outcome need not have been different even if the Soviet missiles had been operational at the time of their detection. The missile sites would still have been highly vulnerable to attack, and Soviet reluctance to initiate a United States-Soviet nuclear exchange would presumably still have been sufficiently great to make the threat of an attack on Cuban bases highly credible. However, sufficient doubt might have arisen on the United States side to cause the adoption of a different policy in dealing with the crisis.

¹⁵ Sorensen, *Decision-making in the White House: The Olive Branch or the Arrows* (New York, 1963), p. 21.

arms buildup in Cuba posed no threat to American security. The Soviet leaders may have calculated, reasonably, that the President and his advisers would subsequently hesitate to withdraw their denials as long as the available evidence remained ambiguous. Moreover, the Soviet leaders may have believed that the administration, on the eve of national elections, would be reluctant to expose what the Soviet Union had done, since unfavorable domestic political repercussions might be expected if strategic missiles were known to be in Cuba and no Soviet commitment to withdraw them had been demanded.¹⁶

The Soviet leaders obviously believed that speed was essential and that deception and diplomacy must be employed in order to minimize the time between the discovery and the completion of the missile bases. They could hardly expect to maintain their deception indefinitely; and in fact, the very objectives they pursued required that the new Soviet military capabilities be revealed at some point after the missiles became operational. In the event of premature detection, the Soviet leaders may have planned to rely on diplomacy to substitute for concealment. They probably thought the likelihood of a strong United States reaction would be reduced as the Soviet strategic missiles became operational and the American people and their government grew accustomed to their presence in Cuba.

Because of their past experiences and their understanding of the American decision-making process, the Soviet leaders may have concluded that the United States government would be unable to assess the situation and devise a policy for dealing with it in the short time available. They may also have supposed that the United States government, before acting, would consult its NATO allies, who could be expected to view the situation with much less urgency than the United States. They may have expected significant opposition from the Organization of American States to any United States proposals for immediate joint action requiring the use of military force. In short, the Soviet leaders had reasons for supposing that there was little likelihood of prompt unilateral action by the United States. They may have expected to reduce the likelihood further by presenting the United States with a *fait accompli*, so that prompt unilateral action to reverse it would appear to require the initiation of violence.

¹⁶ By the same token, however, the fact that the elections were but two weeks away when the President bluntly demanded that the Soviet leaders withdraw their strategic weapons from Cuba may have helped persuade Moscow, from that moment, of the President's determination to act quickly and to use whatever means were necessary to compel Soviet compliance.

The President's earlier decisions on Cuba, according to Sorensen in his discussion of decision-making in the White House, limited his choice of an appropriate response to the Soviet strategic deployment:

To refer once again to this nation's response to the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba, this decision was not wholly developed during the seven days preceding its announcement. President Kennedy, on the morning of the first of those seven days, sent for copies of all his earlier statements on Cuba—on the presence of offensive, as distinguished from defensive, weapons—on threats to our vital interests—and on our armed intervention in that island. These earlier decisions made it *unlikely that he would respond to the October crisis by doing nothing and unlikely that his first step would be an invasion.*

Here, too, the nation's basic commitment to tradition and principle was involved. *An air strike on military installations in Cuba, without any advance warning, was rejected* as a "Pearl Harbor in reverse"—and no one could devise a form of advance warning (other than the quarantine itself, which was a type of warning) that would not leave this nation *vulnerable to either endless discussion and delay* (while work on the missiles went forward) *or to a harsh indictment in the opinion and history of the world.*¹⁷

The Soviet leaders presumably did not expect the United States government to solve this apparent dilemma quickly enough to prevent them from securing their new positions.

If these were among the calculations of the Soviet leaders, events proved them wrong at almost every point. The collapse of confidence that caused Khrushchev to send President Kennedy a private communication on October 26 in which he reportedly indicated his readiness to yield may have been the culmination of a series of disappointed expectations.¹⁸ Although these expectations were not realized, they were not necessarily unreasonable. Many observers in the West were also surprised—though pleasantly—at the speed and efficiency of the American reaction to the receipt of reliable evidence of Soviet strategic weapons in Cuba.

As we noted previously, the United States had little reason to fear that the Soviet venture in Cuba would be accompanied by an aggressive move against Berlin. Yet such fears did arise, and the Soviet

¹⁷ Sorensen, *op. cit.*, pp. 34–35 (italics added).

¹⁸ Apparent inconsistencies and contradictions in communications received in Washington from Moscow and in Soviet press treatment of the crisis (see, for example, n. 6, p. 129.) suggest that Soviet decisions were being made in an environment of considerable uncertainty and perhaps even sharp controversy among political and military elite groups. See Roman Kolkowicz, *Conflicts in Soviet Party-Military Relations: 1962–1963* (RM-3760-PR: Santa Monica, Calif.: The RAND Corporation, 1964).

government may have relied on their deterrent value. If, contrary to Soviet expectations, the United States government was inclined to take military action against Cuba in spite of the missiles installed there, the Soviet leaders may still have hoped that fear of possible Soviet retaliation against Berlin would paralyze American action. In his first letter to President Kennedy eighteen months earlier, during the landings at the Bay of Pigs, Khrushchev obliquely invoked the threat of Soviet retaliation in another part of the world if the United States intervened in Cuba:

We are sincerely interested in a relaxation of international tension, but if others choose to aggravate it, we shall reply in full measure. And in general, it is hardly possible to handle matters in such a way as to settle the situation and put the fire out in one area while kindling a new conflagration in another area.¹⁹

Abundant evidence was available to the Soviet leaders that United States policy on Cuba might be critically influenced by concern over West Berlin. President Kennedy, for example, in his press conference of August 29, 1962, had directly linked the need for American restraint toward Cuba with American obligations in West Berlin:

The U.S. has obligations all around the world, including West Berlin . . . and therefore I think that in considering what appropriate action we should take we have to consider the totality of our obligations and also the responsibilities we bear in so many different parts of the world.²⁰

And on October 22, the President made a special point of warning the Soviet leaders against threatening diversions in Berlin:

This latest Soviet threat or any other threat which is made either independently or in response to our actions this week must and will be met with determination.

Any hostile move anywhere in the world against the safety and freedom of peoples to whom we are committed, including in particular the brave people of West Berlin, will be met by whatever action is needed.²¹

Although, as it turned out, United States fears for Berlin did not inhibit the United States reaction to the deployment of strategic weapons in Cuba, Soviet expectations of American paralysis had not been unreasonable.

Why did Khrushchev change course so precipitately and withdraw his strategic missiles and bombers from Cuba? Some reasons have been adduced implicitly in the preceding discussion of Soviet calcula-

¹⁹ *Pravda*, April 19, 1961. The reference at that time was presumably to Laos.

²⁰ *New York Times*, August 30, 1962.

²¹ *New York Times*, October 23, 1962.

tions prior to the crisis. It remains to make these points explicit and to amplify them.

1. The Soviet leaders had evidently hoped to present the United States with a *fait accompli* in Cuba (like the hastily erected Berlin wall in August, 1961). As it turned out, however, the Soviet deployment was not complete when the President instituted the quarantine and demanded the withdrawal of Soviet strategic weapons.

2. By effectively preserving the secrecy of its initial deliberations in the crisis, the United States government itself was able on October 22 to present the Soviet Union with its own *fait accompli*: the quarantine.²²

3. The United States response, as set forth by the President on October 22, apparently confounded the Soviet leaders. By imposing a quarantine on strategic arms shipments to Cuba as the first in a series of measures designed not only to prevent a further buildup but to secure the removal of weapons already on the island—the other measures remained deliberately unspecified—the United States shifted to the Soviet Union the immediate burden of deciding whether or not to resort to violence. The quarantine was something less than the direct application of violence but far more than a mere protest or verbal threat. The United States Navy placed itself physically between Cuba and the Soviet ships bound for Cuban ports. Technically, had Khrushchev chosen to defy the quarantine, it might still have been necessary for the United States to fire the first shot, though other means of preventing Soviet penetration might have been employed. But once the quarantine was effectively established—and this was done quickly—the decision whether to risk a military confrontation was up to Khrushchev.

In dealing with the quarantine, the Soviet leaders had essentially three choices, all of them unpleasant and one quite dangerous: (1) they could submit to the quarantine by permitting their vessels to be stopped, searched, and, if contraband was aboard, seized; (2) they could avoid a showdown by keeping their ships out of the quarantine area, which (except for an oil tanker clearly identifiable as such) is what they actually did;²³ or (3) they could precipitate the use of

²² Speaking of the deliberations that led up to the President's October 22 speech, Sorensen has said: "All of us knew that once the Soviets learned of our information and planning, our prospects for surprise and initiative would be greatly lessened" (*op. cit.*, p. 31).

²³ Sixteen out of eighteen dry-cargo Soviet ships en route to Cuba, presumably those containing contraband items, reversed course and returned to the Soviet Union (*Hearings on Department of Defense Appropriations for 1964*, p. 12).

force by violating the quarantine, perhaps with the aid of submarines. The prospects for success of the last alternative were very poor; more important, the Soviet Union had nothing to gain by raising the conflict to higher levels of local violence.

4. United States success in securing prompt and unanimous support for the quarantine from the Organization of American States, and the active participation of naval elements from some Latin American countries, must have dampened Soviet hopes of success in bringing diplomatic pressure to bear for a lifting of the quarantine.²⁴ At the same time, United States military preparations made a "waiting strategy" increasingly risky.

5. The President's decision to confront the Soviet Union directly while ignoring Castro also compelled the Soviet leaders to determine their course of action quickly. It removed the basis for any Soviet effort to involve the United States in negotiations with the Cuban government, as the Soviet leaders subsequently attempted unsuccessfully to do in connection with the IL-28 bombers. Diplomatically and morally, the United States decision to confront the Soviet Union directly kept the issue of the menacing Soviet weapon deployment in Cuba separate from the broader and more controversial issue of United States-Cuban relations.

6. Finally, among the factors that must have influenced Khrushchev was the speed and evident resolution with which the United States government acted. The prompt and successful implementation of the quarantine, the rapid securing of OAS co-operation and NATO support, the speed of the American conventional military buildup in the southeastern states, and the alert measures taken by American strategic forces around the world must all in varying degrees have impressed the Soviet leaders. There is no doubt that these preparations were carefully noted by Moscow. We can probably take at face value Khrushchev's statement of December 12, 1962, that he had decided to withdraw Soviet missiles from Cuba upon receiving urgent word that a United States attack was imminent. American preparation doubtless had persuaded him that he had to act quickly in order to limit his losses. He was evidently unwilling to gamble further on the possibility that the United States government would ultimately stop short of

²⁴ Sorensen has suggested that if the OAS had failed to provide the vote necessary to authorize a Cuban quarantine, "the Soviets and possibly others might have been emboldened to challenge the legality of our actions, creating confusion and irresolution in the Western camp and giving rise to all kinds of cargo insurance and admiralty questions that this nation would not enjoy untangling" (*op. cit.*, pp. 24-25).

direct military action, for losing such a gamble would have meant accepting far greater local losses than immediate withdrawal entailed and perhaps even risking general war.²⁵

It is useless to debate whether conventional military superiority in the Caribbean area or over-all strategic nuclear superiority won the day for the United States. The United States possessed superiority in both types of military force and brought both to bear in the crisis; each reinforced the effectiveness of the other. The immediate military threat confronting the Soviet leaders, of course, was that posed locally to Soviet forces in Cuba and to the Castro regime. But this threat was amplified by American strategic superiority, which made credible the announced determination of the United States government to employ force locally if other measures, such as the quarantine, proved inadequate and to retaliate against the Soviet Union if Cuba-based weapons were launched against targets anywhere in the Western Hemisphere. Extraordinary alert measures taken by the Strategic Air Command, including such conspicuous ones as the dispersal of B-47's to auxiliary civilian airfields, underscored this determination.

Manifest strategic superiority made it impossible for the Soviet strategic forces to deter an American attack on Cuba, so that withdrawal was the only path consistent with the firm policy of avoiding any appreciable rise in the likelihood of general war. The attempt to rectify the strategic balance, so that it would form a basis for future political offensives, had failed.

The Cuban missile crisis of October, 1962, dramatized and sharpened even more the main military-political problem that has confronted the Soviet leaders in acute form since at least the fall of 1961: how to achieve, in the face of manifest United States strategic superiority, a military posture adequate to support Soviet foreign

²⁵ Alluding to the role played by the danger of general war in Khrushchev's decision to withdraw Soviet strategic weapons from Cuba, Secretary McNamara testified before a subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations in February, 1963: "We had a force of several hundred thousand men ready to invade Cuba. . . . Had we invaded Cuba, we would have been confronted with the Soviets. . . . Had we been confronted with the Soviets we would have killed thousands of them. . . . Had we killed thousands of them the Soviets would probably have had to respond. . . . They might have had nuclear delivery weapons there [that] might have been operational and they might have been launched. . . . In any event, Khrushchev knew without any question whatever that he faced the full military power of the United States, including its nuclear weapons. . . . We faced that night the possibility of launching nuclear weapons and Khrushchev knew it, and that is the reason, and the only reason, why he withdrew those weapons" (*Hearings on Department of Defense Appropriations for 1964*, p. 21).

policy objectives? As we have argued, the introduction of strategic missiles into Cuba was motivated chiefly by the Soviet leaders' desire to overcome, or at least to narrow, quickly and at comparatively small cost, the existing large margin of United States strategic superiority. The attempt failed precisely because American strategic power, together with overwhelming local military superiority, was quickly and effectively brought to bear in a manner that the Soviet leaders had not expected. Not only did they fail to improve their strategic and related political positions, but their failure revealed more starkly than before the limitations upon Soviet policy imposed by strategic inferiority.

The prospect now facing Khrushchev was bleak. The United States had regained confidence in its strategic superiority and had wrested the initiative from the Soviet Union. Khrushchev found it necessary to cease using strategic threats for offensive purposes, and he scaled down accordingly the objectives of Soviet foreign policy. He pursued a policy of *détente* toward the United States with a single-mindedness of which he had been incapable while he was tempted by the prospects of large gains. In the summer of 1963 he finally accepted the partial nuclear test-ban treaty that the United States and Great Britain had offered him several times previously. This action was facilitated by the acute worsening of Sino-Soviet relations and was in fact intended by the U.S.S.R. to discomfit the CPR leadership. Several lesser agreements also furthered the American-Soviet *détente*, including the establishment of a "hot line," or emergency communication link, between Washington and Moscow and a subsequent agreement that weapons of mass destruction were not to be placed in orbit. The latter accord was embodied in a United Nations resolution approved by acclamation in the General Assembly on October 17.

Soviet policy on Berlin remained quiescent, though occasional incidents on the *Autobahn* served to remind the West that the U.S.S.R. retained the option to renew pressure. Soviet policy toward Western Europe centered on preventing the creation of a NATO multilateral nuclear force, and it was on this issue, above all, that Khrushchev uttered his strongest warning during these years. Even so, his threat was only the possible deployment of Soviet nuclear weapons in the Warsaw Pact countries.

When President Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, the Soviet leaders seemed genuinely shocked and dismayed. They hastened to impress upon the new President their desire to maintain

the *détente*. Khrushchev announced on December 13 that the U.S.S.R. intended to reduce its military budget for the coming year and was considering the resumption of the troop reductions that had been interrupted during the 1961 Berlin crisis. Subsequently, the Soviet military budget was cut by 600 million rubles, around 5 per cent, a reduction that paralleled a \$500 million cut in the United States defense budget announced later by President Johnson. Khrushchev hinted that progress in disarmament might be achieved by a process of "mutual example," in which each side reciprocated the arms reduction measures undertaken by the other, presumably without formal agreement and without inspection.

Meanwhile, the strategic forces of the two sides grew in accordance with programs established some years earlier. In 1962 the Soviet Union finally began to deploy significant numbers of operational ICBM's (until then only "a handful" had been emplaced),²⁶ but by then United States strategic missile programs were operating in high gear: in fiscal 1963 alone the long-range missile forces almost tripled, according to Secretary McNamara, and they were programmed to double again the following year.²⁷ The Soviet ICBM force grew far less rapidly in those years, so that by April, 1964, the American force was more than four times as large as the Soviet.²⁸ There is no evidence that Khrushchev decided during these years to make a serious bid to overcome the lead of the United States in strategic forces. On the contrary, he apparently either decided that such an effort was too costly and unpromising or simply postponed making the relevant decisions, perhaps hoping that future technological changes would facilitate a solution. One such decision that Khrushchev evidently postponed was whether to undertake substantial deployment of an anti-ballistic-missile defense system.²⁹

Opposition to Khrushchev's decisions affecting the future Soviet strategic force conceivably played some part in his sudden ouster in October, 1964. Shortly before his removal, he issued a sharp challenge

²⁶ See p. 37.

²⁷ *New York Times*, January 28, 1964.

²⁸ See "Department of Defense Statement on U.S. Military Strength," April 14, 1964, quoted below, p. 163 (*New York Times*, April 15, 1964).

²⁹ Defense Minister Malinovsky had announced the successful testing of an ABM as early as October, 1961, and Khrushchev himself had boasted in July, 1962, of an antimissile missile that "can hit a fly in outer space" (*New York Times*, July 17, 1962). In the November 8, 1963, military parade in Red Square a new type of surface-to-air missile had been displayed and identified in Soviet commentary as an anti-missile missile (*Radio Moscow*, November 12, 1963; *Krasnaia zvezda*, November 16, 1963).

to military dissidents and their political supporters in a speech that set the guidelines for the U.S.S.R.'s long-range economic plan, gave highest priority to consumer-goods production, and expressed satisfaction that the defenses of the country were "at the proper level."³⁰ No doubt Khrushchev's record in his half-dozen years as head of the party and the government made him vulnerable on several scores. During these years agriculture had stagnated, and industrial growth had slowed down. Soviet leadership of the international communist movement had been openly challenged, and the movement itself seemed on the verge of an historic split. Perhaps equally important, as we have seen, his strategy of bluff and missile deception directed against the West had met with evident failure. For these reasons, and no doubt others that the future will reveal, on October 14, 1964, Khrushchev's reign came to a sudden end. The problems he had failed to solve, in agriculture and industry, in foreign and military policy, now faced his successors.

³⁰ *Pravda*, October 2, 1964.

PART 4

SOVIET STRATEGIC CHOICES AND THEIR POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS